NATURE AS A BOOK OF SYMBOLS

By the same Author.

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NATURE

AS

A BOOK OF SYMBOLS

BY

WILLIAM MARSHALL

SECOND EDITION REVISED AND ENLARGED

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MDCCCXCV

"The invisible things of God, since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made."—*Paul the Apostle.*

"All things in Nature are prophetic outlines of Divine operations, God not merely speaking parables but doing them."—*Tertullian.*

"The visible works of God are formed to lead us, under the direction of His Word, to a knowledge of those things which are invisible; they give us ideas by analogy of 'a new creation,' and are ready to instruct us in the mysteries of faith and the duties of morality."—*Bishop Horne.*

"This earthly world which we do see is an exact picture and pattern of the spiritual and heavenly world which we do not see."—*Kingsley.*

"All the universe is written to me; I must get what it means."—*Walt Whitman.*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

ONE of our critics has told us that "Man cannot exist, at least intellectually, without symbols and signs of various sorts and kinds, and the phenomena of Nature lie readiest to his hand, or rather to his eye, for this purpose. As such, they have been used by the poet and seer in all ages. It does not follow, however, that all signs are equally appropriate: and if it be suggested that this was *the primary purpose of the great objects of the natural world, or indeed entered into their original purpose at all, common sense begins to demur.*" But what kind of "common sense," we inquire? The common sense of a savage is not the same as the common sense of a philosopher, and that of a merely natural man or an agnostic may be very

different from that of a spiritually-minded Christian. What our critic means to deny is this, that the objects of the material universe are Divinely-intended symbols of definite spiritual realities. If his contention be correct, then Nature was never meant to be a revelation of spiritual things. But the "common sense" of many great and wise men has impelled them to a different conclusion, and led them to express the conviction that all natural things are not only embodiments of Divine ideas, but were *intended by God* to represent truths and relationships which are spiritual in their nature and eternal in duration. Take a few examples. Lord Bacon declared, that "Truth and Nature differ only as seal and print." In *Sartor Resartus*, p. 43, Carlyle says, "All visible things are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account; matter only exists to represent some idea and body it forth." Archbishop Trench in his book on *Parables* thus writes, "Analogies assist to make the truth intel-

ligible, or if intelligible before, present it more vividly to the mind. But their power lies still deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and the spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations happily but yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be called as witnesses, *the world of Nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit*, proceeding from the same hand, growing from the same root, *and being constituted for that very end.* All lovers of truth readily acknowledge these mysterious harmonies, and the force of arguments derived from them. To them, the things on earth are copies of the things in heaven." Another—whose name we do not know—has written to the same effect: "Deep in our nature there exists a tendency to seek amongst all interesting objects points of resemblance; and when some intuition keener than

our own reveals that resemblance, we bow to its truth or acclaim to its beauty. This tendency to metaphor, and the universal delight in parables, comparisons, and figures of speech *are no mere freaks of fancy. They have their foundation in the mind and method of Deity, whose thoughts are all in harmony, and whose works and ways are all connected one with another;* so that what we call the imagination of the poet, if his reading be correct, is really the logic of omniscience." The "common sense" of all these wise teachers led them to the conclusion, that "the primary purpose of the great objects of the natural world" was not only to reveal and teach earthly and natural truths, but also facts and verities which are heavenly, spiritual, and Divine. Many similar declarations could easily be given, but we shall add only two. The first is from the pen of a true Christian seer still happily amongst us, and the second from one of the poet-preachers of Wales, whose decease a few years ago was

deeply mourned by many, not only in England, but also in Australia. In his *Loyalty to Christ*, vol. ii., p. 77, Dr. John Pulsford says, "Parables are not forced illustrations, but rather *mirrors of spiritual things*. Heaven and earth are the work of one God. All natural effects hold on to their spiritual causes, and their spiritual causes hold on to them. Spiritual worlds and natural worlds cohere, as inner and outer." And in one of his published sermons the late Rev. Thomas Jones says, "There is a pre-ordained harmony between things spiritual and things material. Material objects express spiritual truths, *and are intended to do so*. Nature is more than it seems." Yes! the eloquent preacher spoke truly when he declared that the harmony between things spiritual and things material was "pre-ordained." And just as this Divinely-ordained harmony is increasingly recognised, we see more and more clearly and fully that God's highest and grandest revelations in Nature and the Bible are identical.

His method in each is the same, and when that method is apprehended the whole visible creation becomes like an emblematic scroll, upon which are depicted the primary and ultimate moral relations subsisting between God and humanity. In other words, we have in Nature the essential substance of revealed truth embodied in material things. Blessed are they who clearly recognise that embodiment, read the God-written Bible of Creation, and see the whole of His plan and purpose in relation to our race plainly revealed. It turns the universe into a Temple where the Divine mind and will are constantly declared and manifested, and in which all truly devout souls may wonder, worship, and adore. As Emerson truly says, "By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of Nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause." The following pages, we trust, will help to make the universe

"an open book" to many. Without the exercise of any fancy or ingenuity on our part, the perfect and "pre-ordained harmony" between natural and spiritual things is here unveiled—a harmony which will be clearly seen by all who thoughtfully read what we have written, because it is stated so briefly and simply that no person of ordinary intelligence need make any mistake or fail to comprehend it. May all who learn to read the spiritual meanings of the great book of symbols not only delight in them themselves, but also endeavour to open the eyes of others to their sublime and beautiful significance, and thereby give to them the power and privilege of a new or enlarged vision, and also a pure, satisfying, and uplifting enjoyment.

One word more. An intelligent and friendly critic in *The New Church Magazine*—who had discerned in reading the following pages that we are not very familiar with the writings of Swedenborg—advised us (before printing another edition)

to acquaint ourselves with that great writer's Doctrine of Correspondences. We thank him heartily for his kind suggestion, and will gladly comply therewith so far as the reading of Swedenborg's works is concerned. But we need not postpone till then the issuing of another edition of this book, inasmuch as we are quite sure that whatever may be the correspondences which the great seer—as his disciples delight to call him—has unfolded they will not lead us to alter or modify those which we have unveiled, because they are an indisputable harmony in themselves, and in perfect and manifest accord with the teachings of Scripture.

W. M.

April, 1895.

PREFACE

THERE are many books which deal with natural *phenomena*, some of which are vividly and beautifully descriptive of material things, just as they appear to the ordinary intelligent observer. There are others which scientifically describe the operations of natural *laws* by which the growth and decay of all earthly things are determined. And there are others—not so many, but still a goodly number—which regard the *objects* of Nature as *emblems* of Christian realities, and all her *laws* as *analogous* to other and higher laws, which act in the sphere of spiritual life and experience. The first class speak of what we may call the *body* of Nature, the second of her *soul*, and the third of her *spirit*. The authors of the first

observe and admire in the outer court of the infinite tabernacle; those of the second investigate and admire in the inner court, and those of the third observe and adore in 'the Holy of Holies.' But so far as we are aware, there exists no work in which the whole visible universe is shown to be *a moral unity*, and strictly analogous to the higher unity of the written Revelation of God. It is our purpose in the following pages to fulfil, in some humble measure this lofty end, by unveiling the spiritual significance of Creation, and exhibiting, not merely the similarity but the actual identity of its teachings with those of the sacred Scriptures. It is true that the Bible tells us more than Nature can, being an express Revelation of the Divine mind and will to sinful men; but—so far as the moral relations are concerned which existed between God and humanity *in the beginning*, and which shall all be restored and eternally perpetuated when redemptive grace has finally triumphed over sin and all its effects—

the teachings of Nature and the Bible exactly agree. This surely is a wonderful agreement. and worthy of being understood, not only because it is beautiful in itself and confirmatory of Scripture, but also and chiefly because it is fitted to bestow great mental and spiritual benefits. The deep satisfaction and pure delight which the clear apprehension of this perfect harmony brings are enlightening to the mind, comforting to the heart, and strengthening to the spirit. We have not allowed imagination any room for play, in dealing with this agreement. They are facts and not fancies which we exhibit, as every one will freely acknowledge who may comprehend what we have written. We have not selected this object and that in Nature and *spiritualized* them ; there is no spiritualizing here. The Bible and Nature have been put side by side, and are seen to be counterpartal. It need hardly be said that this large and most attractive theme has not been treated exhaustively ; it

is inexhaustible. All that we have attempted to do is to present it in luminous outline, leaving its fuller development and application to the reader himself, and to any who may write upon it hereafter. This, however, we may venture to say, that whoever will appropriate and use the key here provided, may proceed to unlock the hidden treasures of creation, and make himself the happy possessor of great mental pleasures and enduring moral wealth. And if he be an instructor of others, he will thereby be enabled to present his teachings in a simple, interesting, and attractive form. Moral facts and spiritual truths are not easily apprehended, but when linked to their material counterparts they are very readily understood even by the ignorant and the young. The Perfect Teacher constantly taught by symbols. The material symbol naturalizes spiritual truth, and the truth spiritualizes the symbol. Nature is a great book of symbols, and the right way to read it is here exhibited. Let

all religious teachers, and especially teachers of the young, embody spiritual truths in natural objects as Christ did—objects with which every one is more or less familiar, and whose beauty and attractiveness are universally recognised and felt, for 'their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world' —and they will find that their words are both welcomed and remembered by those to whom they are addressed.

W. M.

October, 1893.

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CHAPTER I

EVOLUTION AND CREATION

THE doctrine of Evolution as propounded by some of its teachers, and the doctrine of Creation as proclaimed in the Bible, have not yet been reconciled, and — so far as we see — can never be brought into harmony. They are irreconcilable. But we must carefully distinguish. There are two theories of Evolution, which though very similar in form are yet different in spirit. One of them is atheistic in its nature and tendency, though it may not profess to be so, while the other is only agnostic. The former does not hesitate to affirm that "matter is eternal," and that "man *in his totality* is a result of the interaction of organism and environment through countless ages of time." The latter, with more caution and philosophical reverence, refrains from making any such dogmatic declaration regarding the origin of matter

and mind. While both theories maintain that the whole process of Evolution is the manifestation of a power absolutely inscrutable to the intellect of man, they differ in this, that while the one would probably agree with Lucretius that that power is inherent in matter, and that "Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself, without the meddling of the gods;" the other contents itself with believing that the power which operates through all natural laws, and in all visible phenomena, is "unknown and unknowable." The one view gives no place to either God or Creation, while the other merely says that the origin of things is an impenetrable mystery.

The atheistic theory of Evolution is neither truly scientific in its construction nor satisfying in its conclusions. While despising the faith of the Christian, those who hold this theory fondly cherish a faith of their own, — a faith which has no manifest foundation, either in fact or in reason. When they declare, for instance, that "*matter is eternal*," they are not stating a certainty which they know, but only an idea which they have conceived and accepted. The idea

entertained is altogether a matter of faith, and the faith is astounding, for the mere fact that matter exists does not prove that it has always existed. As Herbert Spencer truly says in his *First Principles*, p. 31, "The assertion that the universe is self-existent does not really carry us beyond the cognition of its present existence, and so leaves us with a mere restatement of the mystery." Life too is visible everywhere in its manifold activities and manifestations, but when the theorist declares that *life is inherent in matter and therefore eternal*, he is not stating what he knows, but only what he believes; and the belief is amazing, for spontaneous generation is absolutely unknown. Reason and Will also are immense powers in humanity universally manifested; but when the atheistic evolutionist tells us that "*even the human understanding is itself a result of the play between organism and environment through cosmic ranges of time*," he is not stating what he knows, but only propounding an hypothesis which he has intellectually wrought out or adopted. And the hypothesis is astonishing, for there is no certain proof that matter has ever evolved itself into

mind and become in man an intelligent personality, with consciousness, freedom of thought and self-determining power of action. And if he ascends still higher into the moral sphere, and finds there, not only reason and will, but conscience also, and an almost universal consciousness of guilt, what has he to say concerning these? Denying as he does the reality of sin against God, and regarding evil in every form as only defect, or good in the process of making, he sees no need of a Saviour from guilt and no necessity for any Divine intervention in human affairs. This utter materialism is not a gospel of reason grounded on fact, but only a mere belief founded on speculation; and instead of being a message of hope and comfort to sorrowing, suffering and dying mortals, who through manifold tribulations and distresses are passing away like shadows into the great hereafter, it is only a declaration of dreary hopelessness and gloomy despair. If everything comes out of matter, is only matter, and is destined to return to matter, then there can be no God and no Saviour, no Immortality, and no Heaven. Necessity and Decay are the supreme forces of the

universe, and the end of all earthly glory and happiness is the grave. This atheistic theory, however, is more and more clearly recognised by our foremost men of science and wisest philosophers to be altogether untenable. They are coming to see and acknowledge that the world is fashioned and governed by spirit, and not by matter. As Professor Drummond says truly in his *Ascent of Man*, p. 429, "Evolution is not progress in matter; matter cannot progress. It is a progress in spirit, in that which is limitless, in that which is at once most human, most rational and most Divine. . . . Evolution is nothing but the Involution of Love, the revelation of Infinite Spirit, the Eternal Life returning to itself."

The agnostic evolutionist, on the other hand, declares, that the origin of things is an insoluble problem. In saying this he goes further than he ought, for what is insoluble to him may not be insoluble to another, and he leaves no space for either a Divine Revealer or a Supernatural Revelation, neither of which can be impossible if the great First Cause—the Fontal Force and Supreme Spirit—is God. But the difference be-

tween the agnostic evolutionist and the Christian evolutionist—who bases evolution on creation—though great, is not irreconcilable. The one says, "I do not know"; and the other, "I believe," but the unbeliever to-day may become a believer to-morrow. There is no impassable gulf between ignorance and knowledge, or between doubt and faith. And as the perfect reasonableness of the latter comes into view we may hope that all intelligent and unprejudiced students of science will also become humble and devout believers in Divine Revelation, and admiringly recognise in created things a magnificent and charming manifestation of the wisdom and goodness of God. As Emerson truly and beautifully says, "The moral law lies at the centre of Nature, and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process." But while Nature thus declares the Divine Being and manifests in measure the Divine attributes, yet man can never attain to the true knowledge of God in the school of Nature. Emerson frankly acknowledges this when he adds, "We can foresee God in the distant phenomena of matter, but

when we try to describe and define Himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages." Hence the need of a personal Divine Revealer and a Supernatural Revelation, to tell us truths and give us assurances which Nature of herself is unable to utter. The Bible says unto all men what Paul the apostle said to the philosophers of Athens—'What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all, life and breath and all things.' These are clear and definite declarations, and it is easy to believe them, because they meet and fully satisfy the requirements of reason. Herbert Spencer says: "Those who cannot conceive a self-existent universe, and who therefore assume a Creator as the source of the universe, take for granted that they can conceive a self-existent Creator." Not so. Christians do not believe in the Creator merely because they have conceived Him, or because on

the ground of pure reason they have concluded that He must necessarily exist. Their faith is not based only on their own reasonings or conceptions, but on Divine Revelation, and most of all on the teachings of Jesus Christ. 'By *faith* we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.' This faith is in no respect contrary to reason, and having been inspired by writings and testimony which reason can accept, the faith itself is entirely reasonable. And not only so, but while satisfying the intellect it also comforts the heart, and exercises a purifying and ennobling influence on the character and life. "The inscrutable power" of the evolutionist is God, the great living Force, who originated the universe, and who constantly operates in all things,—the Maker of matter, the Creator of mind, the Father of spirit, the Fountain of life, and the Giver of power to everything that lives. Professor Henry Drummond in *The Ascent of Man*, p. 421, tells us: "There is only one theory of the method of creation in the field, and that is Evolution, but there is also only one theory of origins in the field, and that is Creation. Instead of abolishing a creative hand, Evolution

demands it. Instead of being opposed to Creation, all theories of Evolution begin by assuming it. If Science does not formally posit it, it never posits anything else." Now, whilst not prepared to grant that "the only theory of the method of Creation in the field is Evolution," yet we cannot but welcome the strong and unhesitating declaration of the Professor that "instead of being opposed to .Creation, all theories of Evolution begin by assuming it."

But this also we must grant, that the Infinite and Eternal One, being Invisible, could never as a cognizable Being be known unto men. 'No man hath seen God at any time, *nor can see Him.*' In this matter, the Bible and the agnostic evolutionist perfectly agree. But it is also true, that an *invisible* God could never satisfy man. This is a notable fact, and worthy of the most careful consideration. '*Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,*' has ever been the cry of the human heart—as the idol-worship of many peoples and ages abundantly testifies—and before the cry could be uttered the Divine response was given. 'Before they call, I will answer,' is God's method with His children. But we have here a great

truth which men generally do not yet apprehend, in relation to the Creator and the moral intelligences whom He brought into existence. For instance, in his *Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 475–7, Dr. Fairbairn says, "If God is to become the real Father of man, and man the real son of God, then all the energies and loves and ideals of *the unseen Paternity* must be incarnated and organized in *a visible sonship*, that they may become creative of a mankind which shall realize the filial ideal." . . . "If God's Fatherhood is to be a reality to man, he must see it as it is, know it by experience, by handling it, and by being handled by it. But the only way in which it can thus come, is *in the form of humanity*." . . . "*The Incarnation* may be described as the most illustrious example of the supremacy of God's moral over His physical attributes, and of the relation they hold to the healing and happiness of man. As such it is of all acts the act that most becomes Him, and so the one we can least conceive as accidental. And, therefore, though its special form may be affected by the fact of sin, *yet it were mere impertinence to imagine that but for the accident of sin the*

universe would have been deprived of its most invincible evidence of grace." Now, these are true, beautiful, and far-reaching utterances, the significance of which Dr. Fairbairn himself does not seem to apprehend. If God, as he argues, must be incarnated in "*a visible Sonship*"—if that visible Sonship must come "*in the form of humanity*"—if that visible Sonship in human form must have come apart from "*the accident of sin*," then we earnestly and urgently inquire—If sin had never existed, *at what time* was it most likely that the Son of the Father would become the God-Man—the Visible God? Surely! *before man was created*, and not after the human race had existed for thousands of years upon the earth, and been developed, in measure, out of the natural condition into that which is spiritual. Apart from *sin*, what reason can be imagined for *a flesh and blood Incarnation* of the Divine Son, late in time and after humanity had far advanced on its upward and heavenly way, and become more or less spiritual—even physically,—and therefore 'like unto the angels'? There is no ground for such a conception, either in reason or in revelation. Canon Gore and

others have given expression to the same belief stated by Dr. Fairbairn, that the Son of God must have become Incarnate, even though man had never sinned; but Dr. Denny in his admirable work on *Studies in Theology* most truly says (p. 101), "Scripture never gives the faintest hint of any opening for the mind in this direction." And why? Because the Lord God *was already Man*, and frequently appeared as such in Old Testament times. Dr. Denny does not see this, and must therefore believe that but for the Fall and the consequent need of Incarnation and Redemption, the Divine Son would never have become Human at all. But if so, then how could He have made known the Father? (Matt. xi. 27). Had the Divine Son been *only* Divine, how could He have become the Revealer of God? If the Father is invisible, the Son *as God* must also be invisible, and therefore could not bring the Invisible into view. It needs more than God to reveal God unto men, for men are unable to rise above the level of their own nature, and can only apprehend that which is human. Truly, "it were mere impertinence to imagine that but for the accident of sin the

universe would have been deprived of its most invincible evidence of grace," but it was not so deprived, for *the Creator was God-Man*—the Divine Ideal of man. It was in His 'image and likeness' that the first man was made, and all through the periods of the old dispensations the Visible God frequently appeared unto men as Man.* Indeed, He never appeared as anything else, for He was the Primal Man—the Perfect Man; and had humanity never fallen under the power of sin and death, He would have been to all men their Teacher and Exemplar for evermore. It was the Divine Man by whom all things were created. The invisible Father created nothing directly, but everything through the agency of the Visible Son, 'who being originally in the form of God,' became the Maker of the universe and the great Mediator between God and men. What says Paul? He was 'the *image* of the *invisible* God—*the first-born of all creation*: For *in* him were all things

* Gen. iii. 8; Gen. xviii. 2; Gen. xxxii. 24, 30; Acts vii. 2; Exod. iii. 6; Exod. xxiv. 9–11; Num. xii. 4–8; Josh. v. 13–15; Judg. xiii. 22; Ezek. i. 26–28; Dan. iii. 24, 25.

created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all things were created *by* him and *for* him. He is *before* all things, and by him they all *consist*' (Col. i. 15, 16). And what says John?—'He was *the beginning of the creation of God*' (Rev. iii. 14).

The agnostic evolutionist, on looking back to the origin of things, sees no visible God above and behind them, and therefore speaks of the great First Cause as "unknown." It is true that God in Himself is the Great Unknown, for 'no man knoweth the Father, save the Son.' But the Great Unknown is not "Unknowable," for 'He that knoweth the Son knoweth the Father also.' 'He that hath seen me,' said Jesus, 'hath seen the Father.' Now, the Son could have made these glorious declarations to Adam in Eden just as well as to the disciples in the days of His '*flesh*,' for even then He was the *revelation* of the unseen Father. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father he hath declared him.' He declared and manifested the Father *from the beginning* to both angels and

men. Nature could never have been an adequate and satisfying manifestation of God, and a Book-Revelation like the Bible could never have made Him known as He required to be known. *The revelation needed was Personal*, ay ! and the personal revelation and manifestation of God was *a necessity* apart altogether from "the accident of sin." Dr. Fairbairn is right—more so than he is aware of—when he says, "If God is to become the real Father of man and man the real son of God, then *all the energies, loves, and ideals of the unseen Paternity must be incarnated and organized in a visible Sonship, that they may become creative of a mankind which shall realize the filial ideal.*" He who was originally 'in the form of God,' was 'the *image* of the Invisible,' or in other words the Invisible brought into view. The Son of God became Man before Creation, that He might reveal the invisible Father to all His children, for only thus could He become the visible "Image" and "Form" of God. When this glorious fact comes to be clearly apprehended and taught by the Christian Church, the agnostic sons of science and many others may be led to the feet of the God-Man—

the Revealer of the Great Unknown and the Creator of the universe, and find in Him the crown and consummation of creation, the unity of all the sciences, and 'the Alpha and Omega' of all things, for 'it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.'

The fall of man necessitated the Incarnation of the Son of God, if the guilty race was to be redeemed. But when the Creator became the Redeemer, He did not become 'Man,' as is generally believed. There is no statement to that effect in the New Testament. What it says is this, that He who was originally in 'the *form* of God' was made 'in the likeness of *sinful flesh*' (which is quite another matter)—and 'for the suffering of death.' By that suffering He was 'made perfect,' both as Man and Saviour, and ascended out of the flesh and blood condition into that which is *spiritual*. And now—as the Perfect Man and the Head of a new race—He is the Re-Creator of humanity and the Author of eternal salvation to all who believingly accept Him as their Saviour and Lord.

If the reader should desire to enter more fully into these great and important matters, let him carefully study the first and eighth chapters of our book, entitled *The Visible God, and our Relation to Him in Creation and Redemption* (Hodder and Stoughton).

See Note A.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW THE OLD AND THE RENEWED

In the beginning, when the Earth had been Divinely prepared for the advent of man, *all things were new.* The Lord God looked upon the finished creation, and pronounced it 'very good.' As the product of infinite wisdom and almighty power, it was a magnificent manifestation of the nature and character of the great Creator. Whatever the *method* was by which He brought all things into existence, it is certain that creation was created, and that in all its parts it was and is a glorious revelation of God. Over the beautiful and fertile world in which everything was fitted to fulfil its intended purpose, His complacent smile rested with constant benediction. He regarded with satisfied delight the orb He had made, and every object and creature placed upon its bosom.

And not only were all things new when originated, *but they were also meant to continue new for ever.* There was no inherent element of disorder or discord in material things, out of which universal disorganization and decay were certain to issue. Matter was pure, and although it did not contain within itself the promise and potency of perpetual fertility and loveliness, it was a suitable medium for the constant and everlasting manifestation of Divine power. All natural objects sown or planted in the earth were capable not only of growth and development into perfection, but also of endless reproduction and increase. Of all living creatures we are told that 'God blessed them, and said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.' There is no reason to suppose that they were immortal, and therefore they would have died even though sin had never existed, but death had no sting to them. Being unable to anticipate its coming, they had no dread of its approach, and but for the corruption which man brought into all earthly things, it is more than likely that death when it came to the lower creatures would have brought little or no pain.

In most instances it brings little even now. And what of him whom the Lord made in His own 'image and likeness,' and only for a little while 'a little lower than the angels'? Man was divinely appointed lord and ruler of all. The entire terrestrial creation was put under his feet, and made subject to his dominion, and if only he had maintained his loyalty to the Supreme Ruler, his own supremacy would have been everlastingly continued and established, and the kingdom over which he reigned become more and more fruitful and beautiful for evermore.

But, alas! all things which were new at the beginning, and designed to continue new for ever, *became old and began to perish.* How was this tremendous and appalling change effected? It was brought about in a very natural and understandable way, though many persons find a great difficulty in clearly apprehending it. Let us try to make it plain. And first of all, let it be clearly understood that *man's loyalty to God required to be tested.* This was an absolute necessity, for only by an intelligent and personal rejection of evil and choice of good, could moral character be formed and immor-

tality realized. Though not immortal by creation, he was made for an endless existence, but this could be attained only by the formation and development of a Godlike character. The great Creator gave to him his wonderful threefold nature, with all its marvellous powers and possibilities, but not character. Character could not be given as a gift, but must be fashioned and built up by man himself through a voluntary and loving obedience to the Divine commandments. Therefore he was necessarily placed in a sphere of moral liberty, in which both Good and Evil were set before him, one of which he must personally and intelligently choose. Had he been divinely compelled to choose the Good, the choice would not have been his own, but God's choice, by which character in man could neither have been formed nor cultured. Freedom is absolutely essential to virtue. The Lord God instructed man to choose the good and refuse the evil ; but having invited, warned, and foretold results, He could do no more. Man must be free to choose. And there was no necessity that his choice should be wrong, for he had no inherent ten-

dency to become disobedient, and however strong or subtle any external temptation might be that could possibly be set before him, he had power to resist it. Not only so, but he had also every inducement to influence his mind and will in the right direction. He knew that the choice of Good would bring to him every possible blessing and blessedness, and also that the choice of Evil would issue in disaster and misery, for the Creator said, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die.' And yet, when the hour of trial came, he yielded to temptation, and allowed himself to be deceived. He fell, and his fall was great and terrible. It was a fall from innocence into guilt, from purity into sinfulness, from harmony into discord, and from trust and love into fear and alienation. The effects upon himself were awful; his spirit lost its true life, his understanding was darkened, his will perverted, his heart polluted, and his body made subject to the law of sin and death. And when thus the monarch fell from his throne and became a lost and ruined creature, *his kingdom fell with him.* It suffered shock and injury. The operation of evil did not

end in humanity. It went forth into Nature, and breathed its blighting and destructive influence over all living and inanimate things. The atmosphere is full of pestilential vapours, which are continually wafted abroad on the wings of the wind, waters are polluted, the earth is tainted, and all the lower creatures are more or less sufferers through the fallen condition of mankind. That "Nature, red in tooth and claw," presents a dark and perplexing problem may be freely granted, but as a friend of our own says in a letter to us on this subject—"If Nature has claws, she is certainly not all claws. Nay, her claws are but a very small part of her, and why should we be always staring at these, and neglecting her abundant beauties? And if it be asked why she should have claws at all, there is an answer to this also. We may not be able to give it fully, but we are sure that it lies in this direction, that if Nature is not in every part of her a true teacher and revealer of God, it is only because she has been marred, both in her condition and working, by sin." Or as another—whose name we do not know—has truly said—"Nature is not to be judged by her

perversions but by her general tendencies; and the very existence of pain and suffering shows an interference with these general tendencies, suffering being Nature's protest against them as being *un*natural." 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' Said the great Creator — 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake.' Take an illustration. "The curse," says Professor Balfour, "which has been pronounced on the *vegetable* creation, may be seen in the production of thorns in place of branches—thorns which, while they are leafless, are at the same time the cause of injury to man. That thorns are abortive branches, is well seen in cases where by cultivation they disappear. In such cases they are transformed into branches. The wild apple is a thorny plant, but on cultivation it is not so. These changes are the result of a constant high state of cultivation, and may show us what might take place were the curse removed." As inflicted by man the *curse* is chiefly a curse of corruption, and as inflicted by God it is a curse of deprivation, or, in other words, a withholding from the soil of that fulness of blessing which,

by the impartation of His own quickening and enriching Spirit, it was meant to receive. Under this twofold curse the earth is grievously afflicted. She is disfigured by sterile wastes and dreary wildernesses; torn and tarnished by storms and tempests; devastated by floods and hurricanes; blasted by lightnings and mildew; preyed upon by swarms of devouring insects which her own corruptions have generated, and often terribly injured by epidemics of disease which sweep over her fields, orchards, and vineyards. By biting frosts and gusty winds the tender flowers and blossoms of spring are sometimes scorched and scattered, and by long-continued droughts or rainy weather the fruits of harvest which the summer had developed are not unfrequently more or less destroyed. All this is in fullest harmony with what Revelation declares: 'The land mourneth, for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dried up; the oil languisheth because joy is withered away from the sons of men.' 'The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws and broken the covenant; therefore hath the curse devoured the earth.' 'The

Lord turneth rivers into a wilderness, the water-springs into dry ground, and a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.'

But, blessed be God, He has not left Humanity and Nature to the terrible ravages and ruin inflicted by Evil. He has declared His purpose to become the Renewer and Restorer of all things. That purpose was announced in Paradise itself, immediately after the Fall, when He said to the great deceiver, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' And in the course of the ages, it has frequently been repeated. Through the agency of Isaiah the Lord said, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind; be glad and rejoice in that which I create'; and to John, in Patmos, '*Behold, I make all things new.*' This is a royal declaration—divinely royal. It was uttered by the glorified Redeemer who sits upon the throne of the universe, and as sure as He lives it is certain of fulfilment. Therefore, like Peter, 'we

look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

The Divine work of renewal and restoration *is grounded on a work of Divine Redemption.* It could not be otherwise. Why? Because man did not become subject to evil against his will; but voluntarily gave himself up to its influence. In doing so, he became a wilful transgressor and consciously guilty in relation to God. He must therefore be redeemed before he could be either reconciled to Him against whom he had sinned, or restored to the possession of true holiness and the enjoyment of the divine favour and fellowship. *Violated Law must be magnified, and the penalty of sin endured.* This great redemption could not be wrought out either by the sinner himself, or by any created being in the universe, but only by the Lord God. And even He could redeem the ruined race, only by taking unto Himself, through a natural birth, *a flesh and blood body* that could suffer and die. The original humanity of the Lord being spiritual in its nature—like that which He wears in the heavens to-day — could neither suffer nor be put to death, hence the necessity

of the Incarnation. Because we in our fallen state are partakers of blood and flesh 'He also himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death.' It has sometimes been stated that the life of Christ and not His death was the salvation of humanity, and that our race would have been redeemed by what He said and did, had He never died at all. But this is absolutely contrary to the whole teaching of Scripture, and even to His own definite declarations. From the very commencement of His ministry to its close He frequently and plainly testified that 'The Son of Man *must* be lifted up.' And this 'must' did not come only out of the wickedness of men, but also out of the purpose of the Father. 'No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This commandment have I received from my Father*' (John x. 18). Through a whole-hearted and perfect obedience, He magnified the holy Law of God, which we had violated, and also bore the penalty of sin on man's behalf, which was death. Therefore it is

written, 'He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.' In His three years' ministry He plainly showed that the mission He had come to accomplish was the complete redemption of humanity from sin and all its consequences in body, soul and spirit for evermore. He pardoned guilt and dispelled ignorance; removed moral impurity and healed all manner of diseases; cast out demons and raised the dead out of their dreamless slumbers. And surely! He manifested His purpose and power *to redeem Nature also*, when at one time He walked upon the bosom of the sea and at another stilled into an immediate and perfect calm the ragings of its billows. At length 'He took away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' and did not cease to suffer on the cross until He was able to declare to a hushed and listening universe concerning His great redemptive work 'It is finished.' Having thus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and risen again for our justification, He returned to the bosom of the eternal Father and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

On the ground of this finished redemption,

the glorious work of Divine Renewal has been carried on through all the ages. It was commenced in Eden itself, for we doubt not that the first transgressors were the first to be saved and sanctified. And ever since, every human being who has believed the Divine Word, accepted the Divine Saviour, and received the Divine Spirit, has become the subject of Divine renewal. The Gospel, applied by the Holy Ghost, enlightens the darkened understanding, cleanses the impure heart, quickens the dormant spirit, pacifies the accusing conscience, and permeates all the motives and desires, thoughts and actions of the believer with the principles of a pure and heavenly morality. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation'—new in state and condition, and new in character and conduct. Look at Paul. Did not his conversion and consequent renewal transform his entire being and life? He who had hated Jesus of Nazareth, became His disciple, ambassador, and friend. He who had persecuted the saints, joined himself openly to their fellowship. He who had despised the cross, made it his glory. He who had profaned the gospel, became its most ear-

nest and eloquent advocate. What a marvellous change! Verily, he was a new creation; old things in him passed away, and behold all things became new! A similar change awaits every true and whole-hearted follower of the Saviour. It may not be so great, rapid and manifest in every Christian as it was in the Apostle to the Gentiles, but the divine renewal always produces in measure the same results. *The gospel and grace of God* have done for millions of human beings what nothing else could ever have effected. And they are able to accomplish the same results in every member of our race. Their ability to bless is not limited by their own nature, but only by the unbelief and indifference of the carnal heart. They have true Life—'Life Eternal'—for the whole world, if all men did but know and believe the Truth, accept the Saviour it reveals, and yield to the drawings of His Spirit. Think of the change they have wrought in Britain, where indeed and of a truth they have made all things new. They have given us new homes, new laws, new institutions, new society, and in a very real sense a new world. We live in Paradise regained, compared

with the England of our ancestors. And yet, they have done very little, in view of what they are divinely designed and fitted to accomplish. Indeed, we have only a faint conception of what our happy country would become, if only it were thoroughly Christianized. But the Truth as it is in Jesus is still working like leaven in the bosom of society, and will continue to regenerate and renew. And it is influencing the world to-day more widely and powerfully than ever before. In India, China, Madagascar, Polynesia, and Africa, as well as in Europe and America, it is uplifting men, women, and children, out of the gloom of ignorance and the terrors of superstition into the refinements and pleasures of civilization, and, better still, into the heavenly light and glorious liberty of the life of Christian love. And if only Humanity were saved and sanctified, then would every individual of the race be 'a new creature in Christ,' and partake not only of the joy of angels, but also of the very blessedness of God. That delightful consummation, devoutly to be wished, shall one day be fully realized, when the long struggle between Good and Evil shall come to a close;

when the world's wrongs shall be righted and all its insanities and sufferings pass away; when vice and crime shall be banished from the face of the earth; when slavery in every form shall cease and nations learn war no more; when the meek shall inherit the earth, and abundance of peace shall become the possession of all men so long as the moon endureth; when holiness shall be upon the bells of the horses; when truth shall triumph and righteousness rejoice, and when the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man shall be universally recognised and realized. Then shall be ushered in that glorious golden age of which prophets have spoken and poets sung, when the earth shall roll round one universal hallelujah of praise unto Him who was slain for us, and the will of God be done here as it is in heaven.

And what about Nature? It also has been redeemed by Christ, and shall one day be perfectly renewed and fully restored for ever. Even now it takes on *a new appearance*, to all who have themselves become new. No sooner does any one intelligently and joyfully accept Jesus as a Saviour and Lord, and consciously enter

into the possession and enjoyment of new spiritual life, than behold! Nature is seen in a new light, assumes new beauties, and acquires new significance. This is specially true of those who have the poetic element strongly developed within them, and are ardent admirers of natural things. When they come forth from the Divine presence, where they have prayed and worshipped, meditated and contemplated, they not only reflect in measure the glory of His face as Moses did, but also see that glory shining upon and radiating from all visible things. A few special testimonies concerning this matter, may here be given. Speaking of himself after his great translation from darkness into light, Jonathan Edwards says, "The wisdom, purity and love of God seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, and trees; in the water and all Nature, which greatly fixed my mind. I beheld the sweet glory of God in all these things, and in the meantime sang with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer." John Foster exclaimed, "Sweet Nature! have I not conversed with her, with

inexpressible luxury! A flower, a tree, or a bird, has been enough to kindle a delightful train of ideas and emotions, and sometimes to elevate the mind to sublime conceptions of God." When we listen to such delightful testimonies as these,—which could easily be largely multiplied—we cannot do other than accept the sublime declaration, 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' To some extent, all this is universal Christian experience. The lover of Jesus Christ can see the beauties of earth, and sea, and sky, as the merely natural man can never see them, ay! and enjoy them also far more fully. In him is fulfilled the grand old prophecy, 'Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.'

But the change awaiting the earth is one of *reality*, and not of appearance only. Even now it is being changed by degrees. Although greatly corrupted, and much of the blessing of God withheld from it on account of human transgression, it has never been divinely forsaken nor left

unblessed. All the natural heavens through all the ages have nursed it in their tender bosom like a sickly infant cared for by a loving mother, and poured their quickening and reviving potencies into its enfeebled frame. And from the beginning God has not ceased to bless it through the redemptive agency of human toil, by which the curse of corruption and barrenness has been checked and modified. God bears with evil for a great purpose, and that purpose is good, pure and beautiful, therefore the burdened earth — like suffering humanity—travails in hope of a coming deliverance. All its distresses are prophetic, not of death but of life, not of sorrow but of joy, not of destruction but a new birth, when—like the lovely spring emerging from the grasp of winter—it shall be renewed and glorified and filled with blessing. It only awaits 'the manifestation of the sons of God,' to arise from its tribulations, and bloom with a beauty and fruitfulness which even Eden did not display. 'The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.' Then also shall the thorn-crown be removed from its torn and

bleeding brow, and 'instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' No more shall blight and mildew, and droughts, and untimely frosts, and floods and tempests, scatter the blossoms of spring, wither the flowers of summer, and destroy the precious fruits of autumn, for 'then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.' And ever afterwards the joy-song of Humanity shall be this: 'Be glad, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, and forests, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed his people, and glorified himself in saving them.' 'I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigneth.'

CHAPTER III

NATURE AND THE BIBLE

NATURE and the Bible, are Divine revelations. They emanate from the same source, and show forth the nature, character, and moral perfections of Deity. The one throws light upon and receives aid from the other, and neither the one nor the other can be neglected without incalculable loss to those who disjoin them. But while both revelations are great, necessary and instructive, they are neither co-equal nor co-ordinate. Nature was the first to be given, and it might have been all-sufficient for man's need if only he had retained his original relationship to God, which was one of innocency, harmony and happiness. But when he forfeited that relationship, he not only lost his spiritual life, which was essentially a life of love, *but also the capacity to interpret Nature spiritually.* He lost the golden key to its hidden moral meanings and higher significance, and came in process of

time—through ignorance of God and alienation from Him — to interpret Nature falsely and grotesquely, as in the ancient mythologies of Assyria and Egypt, Greece and Rome. The great material universe ceased to be to men a revelation of God, and when they no longer knew Him rightly they also ceased truly to know themselves. Therefore a new revelation was needed — a revelation of redemption for fallen humanity. And that new revelation, was most graciously given. It was a greater work to redeem than to create, and we learn of that redemption, not from Nature but from the Bible. It reveals man's real condition under the power of sin, and also shows how he may rise therefrom into a state of holiness through the obtaining of a new spiritual life. It also throws the light of heaven upon the face of Nature, and enables the spiritual man by means of earnest meditation to apprehend its teachings spiritually. It is not possible to read the Scriptures intelligently and fail to see that their lofty and divinely inspired declarations are everywhere illustrated by natural phenomena. They justify man's instinctive love of the material universe, and unveil

in that universe with ever-increasing fulness new and inexhaustible wonders. They extract from it deep Divine meanings and show how closely we are related to the mighty material system by which we are everywhere and always overshadowed and encompassed. Nature is taken as the emblem of human experience, the type of human character and the prophecy of human destiny. All true seers and psalmists have drawn from it their sweetest expressions, grandest images and finest similes. They have gathered up its freshness, fragrance and manifold charms to describe, illustrate and enforce spiritual things. Those parts of the Bible which are fullest of natural imagery are the most widely popular and the most powerfully influential with the great masses of its readers—the book of Job, the grand old Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah, the four Gospels, and the great Apocalypse. The merely religious *natural* man can interpret these only intellectually and fancifully, and thus he fails to see their deepest meanings and loftiest unveilings. It is just as true of Nature as of the Bible, that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolish-

ness unto him, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned.' But even the spiritually-minded man will fail to read the great Bible of Nature aright, unless he studies it with spiritual vision and in the light of the written revelation of God. Hence many intelligent Christian people see very little more in creation than is seen by the natural man, because they continue to regard it from the same natural standpoint and with the same earthly expectations as he does. Their spiritual eyes have not been opened to see the spiritual significance of material objects, nor to behold in Nature the same central truths and eternal relationships as are revealed in the Bible. The similarity between the natural and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal was always visible to Christ, and it becomes increasingly visible to Christians also, just in proportion as they study Nature and the Bible side by side. The former lends all her lovelinesses to clothe and commend spiritual truth, and the latter in all its parts glorifies and spiritualizes natural things.

Let it never be forgotten however, that the highest function of the Bible is not to lead men

to the true knowledge of Nature but of Christ, who is the supreme revelation of God. The purpose of the written Word is to make known the Personal Word, who is and always has been to all created beings the visible manifestation of Deity. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the true Christian, and 'he that knoweth the Son knoweth the Father also,' whom to know is life eternal.

If we inquire how far Nature by herself is able to uplift fallen humanity, and minister to the religious element of his being, which is the deepest thing within him, we may find a very definite answer in the civilization and mythology of ancient Greece. Given man's constitution on the one hand and the great and wonderful system of the visible universe on the other, the astonishing results which were evolved are understandable. In him the religious instinct was deep, strong, and indestructible, while in Nature there was everywhere life, motion and mystery. She constantly displayed herself in all her changefulness, beauty and terror, oftenest his friend but sometimes apparently his foe—at one time peaceful and at another furious; here smil-

ing in loveliness and there frowning in grandeur; here whispering in zephyrs and there roaring in thunder; here blessing him with plenty and there starving him with famine; here ministering to his safety and there destroying him with violence. Surrounded by, dependent upon, and constantly ministered unto by such a marvellous, universal, living force, he invested her with attributes in accordance with her varied manifestations. And not only so, but he allowed himself to be gradually fashioned into Nature's own likeness, as she appeared to him with all her seeming eccentricities and apparent contradictions. If he copied her beauty and harmony, tenderness and beneficence, he also imitated her caprice and fierce destructiveness, her moods of storm and tempest, and all the other phenomena which he ignorantly deemed to be real in a moral sense. Her influence, therefore, could not make his character better than her own. Grecian civilization had beauty in some of its loveliest external forms, outward refinement of speech and conduct, and many noble intellectual and moral qualities, but it was also greatly corrupted and deformed by licentiousness, cruelty, and numerous dark

elements which were both degrading and destructive. Nature is neither Saviour nor God. When, therefore, she had done her very best for man, he was still sinful, miserable, and dissatisfied. How could it be otherwise? She is utterly powerless to meet his highest or deepest necessities. She can touch the heart, but cannot cleanse it. She can startle the conscience, but cannot pacify it. She can lay hold of his affections, but is unable to secure his individual love. She can nourish his body and instruct his mind, but is altogether powerless to give spiritual and eternal life to his highest being, for Nature can give only what she has, and her life is merely natural. And then to all his longings for Immortality she can give no real and abiding satisfaction. If man is to be his own helper and Nature his only coadjutor, the very utmost to which he can possibly attain, is a certain amount of physical strength, intellectual culture, and moral development which death may interrupt at any moment. Such a kind and measure of progress will never content man. It only whets his insatiable appetite for higher and enduring life. And having exhausted Nature,

we find him gazing with yearning eyes into the heavens above him and away out into the darkness of the unknown future, as Socrates, Plato, and many others eagerly did. Nature has satisfied much of man's inward craving, but on the point of his destiny she is dumb. Many of her strange hieroglyphics he has deciphered, but from none of them has he been able to spell out the word Immortality. There is no resurrection in Nature. The return of Spring year after year is a revival, not a resurrection. The change of the caterpillar into a butterfly is a transition, not a resurrection. When the life of any creature or thing departs, it never returns to life again. Change is everywhere around us. The seasons come and go, flowers bloom and fade, moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, and man himself dies like the beasts of the field and the place which knew him once knows him no more. Over his grave there reigns a perpetual silence, and to all the yearning inquiries of those who remain regarding a future life there comes no reply. It is neither whispered in zephyrs nor proclaimed in tempests, the brook babbles it not, the river tells it not, and never does the sea let

out the secret in the roar of its billows. Nature in herself is a great enigma.

But when man has exhausted Nature and found no true life and peace—when she has failed him at the most vital points and left him in doubt and fear, another light breaks in upon him from above. It is the light of a new Divine Revelation, and oh, how the gloom is dispelled at its approach like the darkness of night at the rising of the sun! It comes to him with an answer to his deepest questions, with full provision for his spiritual wants, and with glad tidings of great joy concerning the Hereafter. It reveals God as a Father, Christ as a Saviour, and the Holy Ghost as a Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide. It tells him how his guilt may be pardoned, his heart purified, and his whole being attuned to the music of a high harmonious life. It also lifts the curtain which had hitherto enshrouded death and the grave, and shows that the night of time is followed, and all its darkness dispelled for ever, by the light of an eternal day. The grave keeps everlastingly silent, but life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, and men are in darkness and ignorance

no more. The Bible as a Divine Revelation is a great gift to man. It at once reveals the immortality he longs for, and lights the way to its realization and enjoyment. It calms the troubles of the present, fills the bosom with hope in relation to coming time, and kindles a torch upon the dark and silent tomb—a torch which floods with an unearthly glory the gloomy valley of the shadow of death, and sends its rays forward through the night of darkness till they meet and mingle with the beams of the eternal morning, and finally merge in the heavenly sunshine of an endless day. Precious Bible! Nature can teach us much, but she cannot teach like thee! With thy great central facts of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Divine Redeemer, and thy chief doctrines of Redemption and Reconciliation, Renewal and Restoration, thou hast come to enlighten the mind which Nature could not illumine, fill the heart with hopes which Nature could not inspire, and guide the human spirit on its upward flight into the bosom of God, where Nature could never carry it. Whatever theory of Inspiration men may adopt, or however numerous the real or fancied discrepancies and

defects which the so-called Higher Criticism may discover, the Bible continues to be among all the books of the world like the sun in the midst of the planets—the great central instrument and medium of all spiritual light, life and power. Oh! that men would embrace the Bible with a joy proportioned to the blessings it brings, study its sacred pages with an eagerness and a reverence in keeping with their transcendent teachings, believe and practise these teachings with a devotedness worthy of their inestimable value, and magnify the name of the Three-One God whose grace and mercy they unfold! Nature can charm the senses, elevate the thoughts, and show much knowledge, but it is the law of the Lord alone which is perfect, converting the soul. The thoughts of God as revealed in Scripture 'are true and righteous; more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.' Gold and honey are Nature's precious products, but they are not to be compared with the enduring riches and the satisfying provision which the Bible brings. It is the most valuable of all our external possessions. We can afford to lose all earthly treasures and pleasures, but not the Word

of God. It is our only guide through the dark night of time, our only chart for the stormy ocean of life, our only conductor to a glorious and blissful Immortality. May we eagerly cling to it, devoutly meditate upon it, joyfully receive its instructions, and give to them a practical embodiment in our daily life.

Britain owes much to the Bible. What is the source and history of her freedom and greatness? Her freedom is ancient Grecian civilization passed into the Roman type, poured into the English mould, and finally baptized into the spirit and genius of Christianity. And it is the Bible which has given all its worth, grandeur and superiority to her greatness—a greatness which makes her national life,—in spite of its defects,—a pride and joy to her sons, the terror of despotism and the hope of all the oppressed. May she admire and cherish the Divine Book with an ever-increasing fervour, drink more and more deeply into its spirit, and manifest more of its life; so shall she increase her power and pre-eminence among the nations as the land of light and liberty, and scatter the blessings she enjoys over all the earth.

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE SECRETS IN THE DIVINE REVELATIONS

NATURE and the Bible as Divine revelations are meant to reveal. 'God is Love,' and it is the nature of love to declare and manifest itself. Instead of having anything to conceal, or secrets to keep, it longs to be fully understood and reciprocated, appropriated and enjoyed. This is true of our own little loves, how much more true of the perfect and unchanging love of God. The revelation of Himself to all the objects of His love, is the desire of the Supreme Lover. *But a wise love, reveals itself with discretion.* Parents can make known to their children, when they have grown up into manhood and womanhood, many things which they could not tell them when young. In like manner the Divine Father, whose love is infinitely wise, gives us revelations of Himself and His purposes according to our capacity to receive them. Therefore

He conceals even while revealing, because it is impossible for finite beings to receive all at once the communications He is willing to bestow. 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,' not because He is secretive, or holds back from telling men what they are capable of understanding and eager to know, but because in His infinite wisdom and Fatherly loving-kindness He sees that it would be for their injury to make known what He is concealing. In other words, He adapts the lessons which He teaches to the capacity of the learner. The secrets of God are the wise reservations of love. For instance, He did not tell Adam and Eve in Paradise that He knew they would fall into sin, and that He had already provided a Saviour. These were facts, for He sees the end from the beginning, and Christ was the Lamb slain in the Divine purpose 'from before the foundation of the world.' But to have revealed these facts before the Fall would not have been a blessing but a curse. It was soon enough to announce a Saviour from sin when the transgressors knew by painful experience what sin really is and also something of its miserable consequences. And from then

until now the revelations of God have been gradually developed, as men were morally prepared to receive them. The law was given by Moses, and then the grace and truth of the gospel came by Jesus Christ. He was the Great Revealer, but His gospel was progressive, and even at the close of His earthly ministry He said to the disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come He will lead you into all the truth.' 'Clouds and thick darkness are round about him'; but all the concealments of God are only the hidings of His love. Every secret in God is a secret to be revealed according to our ability to receive it, and that ability will unceasingly and everlastingly increase, for our development shall be eternal.

Nature is a Divine revelation, but *she is full of secrets—secrets waiting to be known.* For many generations she concealed laws and processes, which science has discovered, and which are now familiarly and generally understood. The children in our schools are acquainted with facts and phenomena in the material world, of

which even the wisest of Grecian philosophers were ignorant, and yet, much as we have learned, we know but little compared with what the coming generations may discover. Though Nature is full of mysteries, yet, to the earnest and persistent student of her works and ways she freely yields up her secrets, and every revelation disclosed is a blessing to the race. 'The works of the Lord are great, *sought out* of all them who have pleasure therein.' The more they are humbly and patiently studied, the more fully will the secrets which still lie hidden in Nature's bosom be discovered, appropriated, and applied, and their issues become the common inheritance of humanity. She wears manifold veils on the face of her loveliness, and hides away her most precious treasures in the secret depths of her bosom, and the veils are removed, and the treasures revealed only to those who in the fervour of their love continue eagerly to follow her.

And as it is with Nature, so is it also with the Bible. It, too, is a Divine revelation, a far higher and grander revelation than Nature, because it is a revelation of redemption and res-

toration to fallen humanity. And just because it is a revelation, it has no secrets in it. Everything it contains is meant to be known. And what a revelation it is! By it the mind and purposes of God in relation to guilty sinners are brought clearly into view. This revelation was not given in suns and stars, flowers and fountains like the volume of creation, but in simple human language, which is now printed in our own mother tongue. It is a revelation of love, being a revelation of God, for 'God is Love.' It makes Him known unto us as our Father, who delighteth in mercy, and 'with whom is plenteous redemption, that he may be sought unto.'

And yet, *this revelation conceals.* It is full of secrets. It hides while it unveils. Ah, how little of it is understood! In the earnest pursuit of material good and earthly pleasures, multitudes of professing Christian people have neither time nor inclination to 'compare spiritual things with spiritual,' and 'follow hard after God.' Their life of faith and love may be real, but it is not strong, and little wonder! for it is very poorly nourished with the bread of life which

came down from heaven. Christ is that bread, and men eat of Him only by appropriating the truth of the gospel. But worldly Christians do not hunger and thirst for spiritual nourishment. They are 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,' and therefore seldom endeavour to bring their minds into contact with the Divine mind by earnestly studying the truth as it is in Jesus, trying to catch its spirit, enter into its hidden meanings, lay bare its open secrets, receive it in faith and love, and give full and constant embodiment to all its requirements. All this needs a great deal more than the hasty reading of a chapter now and again, or a critical hearing of sermons from selected texts. The sacred word is a deep mine which yields its most precious treasures only to the earnest and persistent digger, who gathers up all the faculties of his mind and the affections of his heart and concentrates them patiently and steadily upon the truth that he may make it his own possession for spiritual ends and practical uses. Those who fail thus to act know only the rudiments of the doctrine of Christ, and even these in many cases very imperfectly. They are wholly ignorant of

'the deep things of God,' and know nothing by experience of the delight of spiritual discovery. Many apprehend in part the letter of the Word, who know but little of its spirit. And why? *For three reasons at least. First*, because they are more familiar with the writings of men than with the revelation of God. The daily newspaper is read with far more eagerness, zest, and practical application than the word of the Eternal. *Second*, because they neither habitually seek nor obtain the help of the Holy Ghost to understand the truth as it is in Jesus; and as spiritual truth can only be spiritually discerned, no one can thus discern it who is not taught by the Spirit. *Third*, because the truth already made known to them, has not been translated into action. Truth is revealed not merely to be known, but practised, and only those who give it embodiment in word and work can really know the meaning and value of the truth. Experimental knowledge is the only really vital knowledge in the spiritual sphere. Take note of that. But a reverential love manifests itself in obedience, and a loving obedience is rewarded with revelations. 'The secret of the Lord is with them'—what is that secret? It is

the knowledge of His will, the experience of His love, and the enjoyment of His favour and friendship. 'He will show them his covenant,' —the plans of His government, and the purposes of His heart. When the disciples on one occasion asked the question 'Why speakest thou unto the people in parables?' Jesus answered, 'It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' In other words, parables were spoken to the multitudes to hide as well as reveal. But to the Twelve, He spake openly and plainly. His secret was with them; and the secret when revealed was for use, for after He had taught them He said, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.' Love delights to obey, and in order that its obedience may be intelligent it must learn of Christ. 'Learn of me,' was His own gracious invitation, and this we are able to do only by receiving gospel truth. The Bible is the chief lesson book in Christ's school; and if

the book be neglected the learner cannot be taught. Every true Christian, therefore, should be an eager and devout student of the Book-Revelation, that the Divine secrets which still lie hidden in its bosom may be increasingly known. And as these are embraced by the receptive heart, and embodied in character and conduct, he will personally grow in grace and in knowledge, and become to others an embodied Bible and 'a living epistle of Christ.'

"The bee within the blossom sings
When summer airs are sweet,
While fragrance gathers round his wings,
And bathes his happy feet:
So in the blossoms of the Word
Our spirits, like the bee,
Would feed upon Thy truth, O Lord!
And love and worship Thee."

CHAPTER V

THE DELIGHT OF DISCOVERY

IT is a pure, satisfying, and uplifting pleasure which the ardent admirer of Nature enjoys, when he walks abroad amid her varied scenes of loveliness and extracts the sweetness they contain. How refreshing, for instance, to the jaded body and the wearied mind of a dweller in the city, to go for a season in spring, summer, or autumn, to the moors and mountains, where sweet peace gently distils its balm upon the mind and heart like dew upon the flowers in the evening hour! And who that has spent a quiet holiday at the seaside, "far from the madding crowd" and their feverish excitements, can ever forget the pleasure which it gave? To walk along the shore in the brightness and beauty of a lovely summer morning, when the face of the great deep shines like a mirror in the sunshine, and the little wavelets, all flashing and flickering as

with myriads of diamonds, seem to whisper strange things concerning the infinite and the eternal as they hasten onward to our feet, is, to all who are capable of appreciating it an enjoyment of a very delightful kind. How pleasant also and soothing to the soul, to wander in musing silence among the trees of the wood, and listen to the music-making footsteps of the Great Spirit, as 'he walketh upon the wings of the wind'—to look up into the firmament and observe the ever-changing movements of the clouds, which carry in their bosoms all the potencies of the ether and the sunshine, to distribute in showers of blessing upon the earth—to go forth into the fields at eventide, when the air is laden with perfumes, and the western sky is made unspeakably glorious by the many-coloured rays of the setting sun; or later still, "when twilight grey has in its sober livery all things clad," to see the queen of heaven ascending the eastern firmament, brightening as she ascends, and the stars coming out one by one to glorify and beautify the night! As men look and listen, the grateful praises of their hearts ought surely to be given to Him who has overshadowed

and surrounded them with so much beauty and grandeur, and endowed them with so many senses and faculties to enjoy them. Why should they covet and follow after the frivolous, exhausting, and corrupting pleasures of the world, when such scenes of wonder and beneficence are so lavishly spread out everywhere around them? The artificial excitements so eagerly pursued by multitudes are not to be compared, but only contrasted, with the pure and purifying joy to be derived from an habitual contemplation and study of natural things. The one class of enjoyments tends to blunt the tender sensibilities of the soul, while the other worthily gratifies them. The former presents the mental powers with delusions and distortions, which at the best are spurious pleasures and very short-lived; while the latter dispenses, with an open and generous hand, delights which are genuine and lasting. Many persons would gladly travel a long distance, and put themselves to much inconvenience and expense, to witness a display of fireworks, who have never seen the rising of the sun, nor wandered forth amid the voiceful silences of Nature at the midnight hour, to gaze with rever-

ent wonder and admiring awe into the infinite depths of the starry firmament. To thoughtless minds, that which is common, in the sense of being always at hand, soon becomes commonplace, and only the rare and startling is wonderful. Hence it is that the little and comparatively trifling works of men are far more thought of and admired by many than the mighty works of God. Creation is the work of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, and all its contents are as far superior in beauty and usefulness to human productions as heaven is high above the earth or the infinite is beyond the finite. We have not far to go to see marvellous sights. Every blade of grass, every cloud in the sky, and every drop of water is a world of wonders. Overshadowed and encompassed by splendours and marvels manifold, let no one refuse or neglect to draw often and largely from this inexhaustible fountain of pleasure. And may all the pleasure derived from the study of Nature be transmuted into praise, and impel men everywhere to lift up their thoughts, affections and desires to God Himself that He—who is unspeakably greater and lovelier than all His

works—may be their exceeding joy and the supreme delight of their souls. As Dr. Peter Bayne has truly said, "The habit of dwelling affectionately on the aspects of Nature, in right quality and just measure, is perhaps a surer proof of moral health and intellectual completeness than any mental characteristic that could be named. It testifies to an openness to gentle, unexciting influences,—to a freshness of soul rejoicing in Nature's dewdrops,—to an innocence which can sympathize with the tender harmony of Nature's joy. It evinces a delicacy of soul that would recoil with sensitive pain from guile, malignity, and baseness. It may fairly be doubted whether any man, retaining the child-love for green fields and morning flowers, has ever been consciously and inveterately bad." "For a true Christian," says Ruskin, "it is not possible to walk across so much as a rood of the natural earth, with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength and hope from some stone, flower, leaf, or sound, nor without a sense of the dew falling upon him out of the sky." Every Christian lover of Nature knows all this to be true. Her influence upon the pure-

hearted, is constantly refreshing and delightful. Even the merely natural man—who has retained in measure the innocence and sensitiveness of childhood—is delightfully conscious of the inspiring, purifying, and uplifting influences of Nature, but when such an one is Christianized and his innocence spiritualized into holiness, then his love of all the beauties of creation becomes a far higher, nobler, and intenser thing, and his blessedness a far deeper delight than anything he has before experienced.

The longer and more patiently any intelligent mind observes and studies the beauties of the material world, *these beauties increase and multiply endlessly* and fill the soul with an ever-deepening gladness. 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands.' Observation is the pioneer of all true knowledge, and the doorway into the temple of truth. Almost all the great discoveries which men have made in Art and Science, were the results of careful observation. The fall of an apple led to the discovery of the great and universal law of gravitation, and the sight of a spider's web on a dewy morning gave

to Captain Brown the idea of the suspension bridge. But we need not multiply instances, for it was by keen observation and persistent reflection that all great and valuable discoveries have been made, and permanently added to the precious possessions of mankind. But multitudes of people fail to observe. They pass through the world pretty much as an ass would go through a garden, oblivious of everything but that which ministers to their physical appetites and enjoyments. If the objects of Nature are to be rightly apprehended and appreciated, they must be thoughtfully regarded. How else can their uses and beauties be known? The very smallest grasses, lichens, mosses, and wild flowers, are full of wonders waiting to be revealed. "Rightly viewed," says Carlyle, "nothing in the world is insignificant; all objects are as windows through which the seeing eye may look into infinitude." Oh for the "seeing eye"! There are many persons who delight to go hither and thither in search of Nature's beauties, who never see anything more in them than just their colours and forms. They are sensuously affected by the sight, but neither intellectually en-

lightened nor spiritually blessed. Let all lovers of Nature be keen observers. Wonders upon wonders will unveil themselves to their astonished gaze, and add continually to their enjoyment. And this also they will find, that the delight of discovery is a pure, satisfying, and uplifting power. It helps to keep the heart young, fresh, and susceptible, and turns the whole visible universe into a school of learning and a palace of pleasure.

And if men call the Sciences to their aid, Nature will yield them a still fuller and deeper enjoyment. Her visible phenomena, it may be, have charmed them from the days of their childhood, but when they came to understand something of her laws and processes, as science enabled them to do, new elements of pleasure came within their reach. They could wander forth amid the beautiful objects around them, and tell something of their why and their wherefore, how they are produced, and the ends of utility and mercy they are designed to serve. Into the vast acquisitions made by men of science we may all enter. We are now put into possession, at a very easy rate, of that which

cost them much. Through patient toil and heroic endurance, they drew near to Nature's treasure house, were admitted into her secret chambers, and returned laden with her gifts. And these gifts are for our appropriation. Think of the manifold character of their labours and the different directions in which they roamed and explored. They entered into the depths of the sea, and saw astonishing marvels in its great world of waters. The fishes which swim there, and the flowers which grow in the far-down caves, have been described and classified. They have seen how the beautiful coral strands are formed by myriads of tiny creatures working secretly in the waters. They have noticed the wonderful law of currents, and solved the phenomena of tides, and now, by their marine raids, the mighty ocean, once a sealed region and invested with the dread which ever hangs over the unknown, has become the highway of nations, and one of man's familiar things. They have acquainted themselves with the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air; roamed with the lion in the forest and soared with the eagle towards the sky; followed the roe in the valley,

and the deer on the mountain; taken the serpent from its haunt, and wooed the nightingale in its woodland home. They have scanned the loveliness of wood and field, valley and river, and seen that the many-coloured vesture of earth is indeed what Goethe called it, "The living garment of God." Having examined it carefully thread by thread, they have found it to be—like the symbolic tunic which Jesus wore—'without seam, woven throughout.' In every aspect, Nature is wonderful. The variety of leaf, the harmony of hue, the delicacy of shade, the multiplicity of form, and the grace and grandeur in which the whole is enshrined, have caused words of admiration and praise to burst from the lips of her lovers. By the aid of the microscope, they have opened up a marvellous region of order and beauty in the insect world,—a region which presses upon us on every side, and whose wonders are almost unknown to multitudes. God's works are as great in minuteness as in magnitude, and the thoughtful mind is deeply impressed by the fact, that there is a world around us too fine for unassisted vision, which is yet as perfect and beautiful as

the grandest works of the Creator. They have also lifted up their eyes to the heavens, and with the assistance of the telescope opened up to themselves and to others a star-gemmed universe of infinite magnitude. By their daring flights, the midnight firmament, once so dim and confused to mortal eyes, now stretches out above us with a regulated glory like a scroll which may be read. It reveals worlds on worlds in endless profusion, each rolling round its central sun, and carries the mind into a contemplation of space, size, and numbers absolutely overwhelming, till burdened by the weight of glory and immensity unveiled, it returns from its soaring flight to worship before the throne of Him who created all these orbs by His great power, and called them all by names. All honour, therefore, to the industrious sons of science who have toiled so bravely and patiently for the good of mankind. May we who have gained so much by their exertions enter gratefully on our rich inheritance and prove the worthy sons of such noble sires! Let every student of Nature's workings eagerly appropriate all the scientific knowledge that may be within his reach, that his

understanding of the laws and processes of the visible creation may be steadily advanced, and the enjoyment derivable therefrom greatly and continually increased. But while there is an outer and an inner sphere of Nature—the sphere of Phenomena, and the sphere of Law,—there is also the inmost sphere of Life where we find God. The life of Nature is a derived life; it flows continually from the bosom of Him who is 'the Fountain of Life.' The life of Nature is the life of God, which is the life of Love, and that life flows through all her laws, and becomes visible in all her phenomena, except where these have been tainted and perverted by the corrupting power of Moral Evil. Hence Nature throughout is a revelation and manifestation of love, as all spiritually-minded psalmists and seers have clearly discerned. With one united voice they exclaim, 'All thy works praise thee, O Lord! thou hast made me glad through thy work, I will triumph in the works of thy hands.'

The Bible also is a threefold unity, like Nature. There is trinity in unity in all God's works, as in God Himself. In Nature, as we have just seen, there are phenomena, laws, and

life, and in the Bible there is a body of facts, a soul of doctrines, and a spirit of love. Whoever will devoutly, intelligently and persistently study its pages, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, shall certainly be led by the Spirit of the truth into all gospel truth, not at once but progressively. Many of God's children have made it the special study of their daily life, and every one of them, like the prophet Jeremiah, has been able to say, 'Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.' Appropriating Christ's words, they thereby appropriated Christ Himself, and were led into the knowledge and experience of the wondrous things of God. But no one ever imagined that he had exhausted the book, and that no more of God's secrets were left to be discovered. Instead of this, they all realized and acknowledged that,—like the love of Christ or the nature of God—'it passeth knowledge.' The Infinite Mind can never be fully comprehended by the finite. For ever and ever we shall know more and more of God, but never know Him fully, therefore our progress shall be perpetual, and our blessedness ever increasing. The Divine Father

shall bring us nearer and nearer to Himself, eternally reveal the precious secrets of His love, and cause us to understand by blissful experience what it is to be 'filled unto all the fulness of God.' But even here and now that experience may be ours in measure, if only we prayerfully ponder the sacred Scriptures, receive the truth into mind and heart, and give it practical embodiment in daily life, that God's will may be done and His name glorified. And from day to day, either as new truths or new aspects of old truths dawn upon the mind, the heart shall be thrilled and the soul satisfied with the delight of discovery. But every Christian is not an earnest and persistent student of Divine revelation; and not having received the deeper spiritual teachings of the Bible, neither does he apprehend the sublime symbolic teachings of Nature. He may perhaps see more beauty in natural phenomena, and more of marvel and design in the operations and effects of natural laws, than were ever apprehended by any of the old heathen sages, even the wisest and best. He may also recognise here and there at times shadows and emblems of things Divine and

eternal, and which are far more real and lovely than the grotesque imaginings of even the wisest pagan minds as these were embodied in the ancient religions. Thus far the Bible may have already carried him, but he has not yet recognised the glorious fact that *the entire creation is a unity*, and that all her objects are beautiful symbols of the spiritual realities and abiding social relationships revealed in Scripture. When these charming Symbols come to be clearly unveiled to his intellectual vision it may be that the book of Nature will lead him to the book of Life and impel him to read and study it with more devotedness than hitherto, until it too becomes a sublime unity to his mental and spiritual apprehension, and the two great revelations of God are seen to be not only harmonious but counterpartal.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT BOOK OF SYMBOLS

NATURE is a great embodiment of Divine wisdom, a glorious manifestation of Divine goodness and love, and a sublime revelation of the Divine mind and will. The Divine Thinker has made known His thoughts to us in material things, and every intelligent and devout student of Nature will unhesitatingly exclaim with the old Hebrew psalmists—'O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.' 'How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!' It is the purpose and desire of the great Revealer, that men should read and ponder, understand and appropriate, apply and enjoy His embodied thoughts, that thus they may be spiritually enlightened and educated, and brought with ever-increasing fulness into harmony and oneness with Himself. The thoughts of God are 'very

deep,' and their depth is that of an infinite wisdom and an unfathomable love.

But God's thoughts as revealed in Nature, appear very differently to different men, for "While one traveller meets angels at every step and finds the earth a paradise, another meets but the outward forms of things and sees little of their loveliness." The ox feeding in the meadow discerns not the beauty of the flowers growing among the grass, and never stands to contemplate and admire them; it has appetite for food, but no soul for form or colour. And thousands of human creatures, alas! are only animal men who have little or no regard for anything above the lowest physical enjoyments. The wondrous works of God, are not wonderful to them. They excite within them, neither delighted surprise nor thoughtful admiration. Their minds are imprisoned in ignorance, and their degraded souls have but little moral sensibility. They do not recognise God's thoughts in natural things.

There are others who, though comparatively ignorant and thoughtless, are neither brutified nor foolish. They retain in larger or smaller

measure an intellectual and moral susceptibility, to which the manifold charms of the natural world successfully appeal. As they gaze upon the star-spangled sky in a clear winter night, or on the flower-gemmed earth in the season of spring, or on a wood in the fulness of its summer foliage, or on a cornfield in sunshine, or on a fruit tree when heavily laden with rich autumnal glories, they are impelled admiringly to exclaim, 'How lovely!' And in some dim, bewildered way they may even think of God for a moment, the beauty and beneficence of whose works have thus transiently impressed and pleased them.

There are others, whose minds are active and earnest, and whose feelings are gentle and refined, to whom the ever-changing scenes of Nature are a constant joy, and who eagerly desire to learn the lessons she is always ready to impart. But the truths she reveals to them are determined by their own capacity and condition, spirit and purpose. It may be that they come to her as *artists*, merely to observe her varied forms and hues, and be taught how to mingle the colours aright which they wish to

put upon canvas. Or they may come to her as *poets*, not only to admire the beauty of her countenance and the perfect pattern of her ever-changing dress, but also to study her constantly varying moods and manifestations that they may faithfully describe in tuneful words all her wonderful works and ways unto men. Or they may come to her as *philosophers* and *scientists*, not so much to see and admire the beauties of her visible phenomena as to study the hidden operations out of which all these beauties have been evolved. They delight to pass into the unseen realm of law, and investigate her marvellous doings in the secret places of her activity. But all these, if they are only *natural* men, are still in the outer court of the God-built Temple of Nature, and have never entered within the veil to behold the Shekinah of the Divine glory. They do not possess the inward and spiritual vision, by which alone Divine and eternal realities can be seen typified and symbolized in material things. As we have once and again asserted, it is only the spiritually-minded man who can read and interpret Nature *spiritually*, and even he is able to do so only in proportion as he studies

her in the light of the Bible and regards her as a great book of symbols revealing the mind and will of God. The author of *The Typical Character of Nature* truly says: "The fleeting objects of Nature are in fact God's own hieroglyphics; and while many may have succeeded in making happy guesses as to the meaning to be attached to some of the most important of them, it is the Bible and the Bible alone which is the true Rosetta Stone, enabling us in our fallen condition to decipher with certainty their real significance." In other words, none but the earnest student of the written revelation can truly interpret the teachings of the great revelation of Creation. He learns to see in all her changeful phenomena and changeless laws far higher beauties and greater marvels than are visible to the artist and the poet, the philosopher, and the man of science. They have only physical sight and intellectual onsight, but he obtains, and with ever-increasing *in*sight, the spiritual and profoundest apprehension of created things. They see only the varied forms of matter and recognise the hidden forces by which these forms are fashioned and governed, but he

passes through the outer sphere of phenomena and the inner sphere of law into the inmost sphere of life, where he finds—through spiritual knowledge and a reasonable faith — that all Nature's laws are gathered up into the hand of the Eternal Lawgiver, and into the unity of an unchanging love. And now that he looks out from the centre of things towards their illimitable circumference, the universe presents itself to him in a new light and he is able to regard it with a new joy. *Laws* are seen to be not self-created and self-sustaining entities, but embodiments of Divine wisdom, instruments of Divine power, and channels for the endless outflow of the Divine will. And all natural *phenomena* are a Divine revelation—a revelation of God, a revelation of man, and a revelation of man's relationship to God, in all its varied aspects and manifold possibilities. Nature thus becomes a great book of Symbols full of sublime revealings and harmonies, all of which when apprehended tell him exactly the same ultimate facts and truths which are declared in the Bible.

Nature is a work of Art, and the Lord God the great Artist. All other artists are only

copyists of His works, and many of them, alas! are very inferior copyists. They see only the face and form of Nature, or at best her soul in measure, but few of them have obtained a glimpse of her spirit, and are therefore unable to represent her hidden ideas in pictures they make of her visible forms. If an artist is to make a correct and really valuable portrait of any person, he must not only paint the form and features, but also give expression in these to the spirit of the man, or, in other words, to his disposition and character. In like manner, if he is truly to represent the objects and scenes of Nature, he must put into them an expression and revelation of the Divine thought and purpose of which these are the embodiment. And just in proportion as he succeeds in truly representing idea in form, and spirit in symbol, will his work prove interesting, instructive, and helpful unto men, and the work itself endure. But how can the *spirit* of Nature be apprehended by a merely natural man, or her hidden meanings and purposes brought into view by one who is not acquainted with the mind and will of God? The universe is a revelation of Him and also of His

purposes in relation to humanity, and he only who truly knows God, by loving Him and apprehending something of His intentions towards our race, can be a great artist and attain through his work an earthly immortality.

The universe is also a sublime Poem,—the beautiful and harmonious utterance of the Divine mind and heart! As music is the poetry of sound, so poetry is the musical utterance of thought and feeling—the happy union of soul and language. God is the perfect Poet, and all human poets only imperfect imitators. In writing of Nature, the most of our poets have spoken only of her visible appearances, and the operations of her laws, and of these chiefly in relation to the ordinary social life of mankind. Very few of them—and even these comparatively seldom—have passed through her form and mind to her hidden heart, and unveiled the moral meanings and spiritual purposes of her laws and phenomena in relation to the higher nature and eternal life of men. Wordsworth,—who was emphatically the poet of Nature,—was well acquainted with her beautiful face and ever-changing features, and at times had communion

with her mind, but he scarcely ever had a glimpse into her spirit, and has therefore failed to make her a medium of lofty spiritual instruction, and a means of great moral uplifting to mankind. Tennyson, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Whittier, and others among modern poets, had a far fuller, clearer and deeper vision of the inner secrets of Nature, and therefore their poetry is much more profound and spiritual in its character, and ministers inspiration and strength to a loftier class of mind. The highest kind of poetry must always be that which gives expression to the subliniest thought and purest feeling in appropriate, rhythmical and beautiful language, and which reveals most clearly and fully the unity of all truth and the ultimate purpose of Divine revelation. This is the poetry which shall live, and help humanity most effectively in its onward and upward course towards the goal of moral perfection and an immortality of blessedness and power. We are deeply indebted to the poets and poetry of past times. In poetry, some of the greatest souls who ever lived have poured out their richest treasures; in poetry, the noblest genius has winged its loftiest flights, and in

poetry, the thought-wealth and love-wealth of the world have been expressed and embodied, so that men and women everywhere may now appropriate their enduring riches and make them their own for ever. We have Shakespeare—the great dramatist—unfolding the truth and beauty of the universe, and unveiling, as with a magician's power, the deep recesses of the human heart. We have Milton—the blind Seer and inspired Psalmist of the grand old Puritan age—ascending with us into the heavens, causing us to hear the songs of the Seraphim, the rushings of angels' wings, and the awful voice of the Most High; and thence descending with us into the depths of hell, where he guides our faltering footsteps through the horrors of its burning halls. We have Burns—the Ayrshire Bard—who sweetly sang his unpremeditated strains on Nature and common life in the humorous and pathetic language of dear old Scotland. But why continue to name star after star in this brilliant constellation? They stud the firmament of mind with the lustre of the milky way, and beneath the radiant azure all men may stand, look upward and admire. But the facts, truths and moral

beauties of relation and comparison which lie hid in Nature, Scripture and humanity, have not all been gathered up by the poets of the past. We have sometimes been told, that we can never have another Shakespeare, a Milton or a Burns; but why not? Is it because in these sons of genius the human intellect blossomed out to its utmost extent, and exhausted its fruit-bearing power? Or is it because they ransacked the world, and gathered up its chief thought-wealth into their utterances, leaving nothing greater behind? Certainly not! They neither reached the furthest capacity of man's mental powers, nor the ultimate of poetic possibilities. The greatest masters of song are yet to come, and when they do come they will unfold in tuneful thoughts and words the harmonies and beauties of Nature, and the spiritual teachings of the Bible, and show their perfect adaptation to the manifold necessities of humanity, and also the entire fitness of both Divine Revelations in their union and unity to be the best of all lesson-books in the school of Jehovah-Jesus, who was and is and ever shall be the greatest Teacher of our race.

And if all this be true of the artist and the poet how much more of the preacher! It is his great mission to proclaim a glorious gospel of spiritual truth for the saving and sanctifying of men—good news from the Divine Father to His alienated and guilty children. Such a gospel ought to be preached not only with simplicity and earnestness, but also with great attractiveness and winning power. It was thus that Jesus preached it—not metaphysically, nor philosophically, nor even doctrinally, but analogically and naturally, giving the loftiest truths embodiment in visible and common objects, for 'without a parable spake he not unto the people.' And even when He plainly revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to His disciples, and did not speak in parables, yet His words were almost always clothed with simple metaphors drawn from Nature. Hence the perennial freshness, beauty and power of His teaching. He who spake as never man spake uttered comparatively little which was not illustrated by objects in the natural world. *His gospel is steeped in Nature.* The lilies of the field,— the flowers by the wayside—the figtrees which skirted the path —the

olives which grew on the slopes of the hills—the vine and its fruitful branches—the sparrows chirping on the housetops—the young ravens which cry—the sheep feeding on the uplands—the grain of wheat—the corn growing and waving in the fields—these, and many other natural objects, were the texts of a large number of the Divine sermons which the God-Man preached to men in the days of His flesh. He was constantly giving utterance to the word 'like,' because every material and earthly thing was to Him a symbol of something moral and heavenly. It would have been well if all preachers had more or less fully followed His method. The perfect Preacher is a model to all preachers. Metaphysical preaching is neither food nor physic for the people; literary and philosophical preaching may gratify the intellect and the imagination, but is seldom greatly useful in the saving and sanctifying of souls, and mere doctrinal preaching is dry, hard and husky, presenting the gospel in skeleton to the logical understanding only. The most of men care very little for systems of theology, and least of all in sermons. But let the gospel be preached by any one spiritually

and analogically, as Christ Himself preached it, and of him too it will be said, 'The people heard him gladly.' *Missionaries*, especially, ought to follow this method. It is very difficult for a poor ignorant person to apprehend the gospel when put before him in a purely doctrinal and spiritual form ; but let the preacher link the truth to its symbol, with which his hearer is familiar, and the truth in time will not only become attractive but also luminous to his dark mind. Tell him, for instance, that the Son of God is the Light and Life of the world, and he will very dimly apprehend what you mean ; but tell him also that the natural sun is His symbol, and show what its beams effect in the natural sphere, and he will soon lay hold of your meaning. But the analogical method of teaching, ought to be followed and cultivated most of all *by instructors of the young*. Children are keen observers, but have not yet begun to exercise to any large extent the reflective faculties. Their look is outward rather than inward. They are also instinctive lovers of natural objects, but care very little for abstract truths, for the simple reason that they do not understand them. Let

the truth and its counterpartal object be joined together, and then they will not only listen but also apprehend and appreciate. Any Sunday School teacher may put the matter to the test. Let him tell his scholars on one Sunday, of God and His attributes in a doctrinal and purely spiritual way, and then on another, show that Deity and all His perfections are represented by the sky (as is clearly taught in a subsequent chapter) and he will see how differently they will listen. And if he is wise, he will allow that difference to be a lesson to himself. Analogical teaching is the most attractive, powerful and instructive, and when any teacher comes to read and understand Nature as a great book of symbols, analogies will always be available *of a real and vital kind.*

We close this chapter with a few pregnant lines from *Aurora Leigh*, p. 302, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning :—

"Truth, so far, in my book ;—the truth which draws
Through all things upwards,—that a twofold world
Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural things
And spiritual,—who separates those two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,

Tears up the bond of Nature and brings death,
Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,
Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men,
Is wrong, in short, at all points."

Having thus far dealt in a general way with Nature and the Bible as Divine revelations, we shall now proceed to link together the great truths of the written Word with their corresponding symbols in the material universe, and show the perfect moral unity of each, and of both when united.

One or two of our critics have spoken of the preceding chapters as merely *introductory* to those which follow. In a sense that is true, but the latter chapters without the former would have given a very incomplete statement of the great truths which we wished to set forth concerning Nature and the Bible. As the foundations of a house are introductory to the building, so these earlier chapters are a necessary basis for all that are to follow, and yet it is in the remaining chapters that Nature *as a Book of Symbols* is specially dealt with and the chief purpose fulfilled for which these pages were written.

CHAPTER VII

THE SKY AS A SYMBOL

THE supreme fact of Divine Revelation is God What then, we inquire, is the Symbol of God, in Nature? We answer at once,—*the Sky is the symbol of God in the natural world*, and our reasons for saying so are simple and sufficient. Professor Max Müller and others have told us that the sky is spoken of in all languages as the special abode of the Supreme. In this matter, as in many others, the universal and instinctive conceptions of humanity are approved and verified by the written Word, for are we not told in the Bible that 'there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, AND IN HIS EXCELLENCY ON THE SKY.' The instinct of men and the Word of God are here in harmony, and therefore we are justified in regarding the sky as a sublimely-beautiful and perfect symbol of Deity.

God is the greatest of all Beings—the Infinite One—and the Sky is the greatest of all natural phenomena, because it is infinite, and contains, encompasses, and permeates them all.

What is the sky? It is not a substance which you can grasp, nor an object having form, but an infinitely-extended ether. It is an elastic medium which fills all space, through which suns and stars roll and shine, and which may be regarded, — because of the ethereality of its nature, — as the most spiritual thing in the material universe, and therefore a fitting and suggestive emblem of Him who is the Great Spirit,—the Infinite and Eternal One.

All the special features and characteristics of the sky, are also charmingly representative of the physical and moral attributes of God. We may see in the sky, as in an infinite mirror, both the natural and spiritual perfections of Deity gloriously represented. Take a few of the chief :—

1. *The sky is everywhere.* It is not confined to one part of the universe, but is equally present, and no doubt equally visible, throughout the entire realm of creation. Every orb in space

has its sphere of existence and orbit of motion in the boundless bosom of the sky. We look yonder, and it is there; and if we were yonder, we should see that it is here. This world on which we live, like all other worlds, is overshadowed and encompassed by the sky; and every inhabitant of earth lives, moves and has his being in the sky. Now, *God is everywhere*,—the Omnipresent One. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' A thoughtful heathen once asked a Christian missionary, "Where is God?" To which the ambassador of Christ wisely replied, "Where is He not?" 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?' Every human being might exclaim, with one of the old Hebrew psalmists, 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' The great Omnipresent One *is also Omniscient.* 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall

not see him?' is His own question. Even heathen peoples clearly recognise this natural attribute of Deity, as the following Vedic hymn —written, probably, 2,000 years B.C.—plainly and beautifully testifies :—

"Whoever stands, whoever moves,
Or steals from place to place;
Or hides him in his secret cell,
The gods his movements trace.

Wherever two together plot,
And deem they are alone;
King Varuna is there, a third,
And all their schemes are known.

Whoever far beyond the skies,
Should think his way to wing,
He could not there elude the grasp
Of Varuna the King."

The thought of Divine Omniscience is very unwelcome to lovers of evil and doers of wrong, and therefore they do not care to entertain it. But to all true lovers of God it is a great delight and fills their hearts with peace and rejoicing. Not that they are sinless, or far advanced in holiness, or have ceased to grieve the heart of their Divine Father, but because they have taken part with Him against themselves, and earnestly

desire to be and do that which is pleasing in His sight. Their prayer is this: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' What is Omniscience, but just the unlimited vision of the Infinite Love?

2. *The sky is unchanging.* Gaze into the bright ethereal blue, and whether it be on a sunny and cloudless summer day, or in a clear and frosty winter night, you will find it always the same. The clouds in the firmament come and go, and are always changing, but the sky changeth never. It appears to men to-day just as it did to the first of our race in Eden. And *God is 'the same*, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' 'He is without variableness or shadow of turning.' 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the worlds, even from everlasting to everlasting he is God.'

3. *The sky is perfectly pure.* The atmosphere of our world is constantly being corrupted by the baleful exhalations which ascend from the manifold pollutions of the earth, but the ether of infinite space is not defiled. It is as free

from taint as the breath of the Eternal, and is not only pure in itself but also the great purifier. It is therefore an admirable and charming symbol of *the incorruptible holiness of Deity*. It speaks to us of the ineffable purity of the Holy One. His purity is perfect, yea so utterly perfect that even the holy angels veil their faces before Him and adoringly cry, 'Holy Holy, Holy is the Lord God: Thou *only* art Holy.' Their holiness is creaturely and finite, derived and progressive, but the holiness of God is infinitely perfect.

4. *The sky is all-embracing.* It softly and tenderly enfolds in its motherly bosom all the worlds in the universe and every world separately, and cherishes them there everlastingly. Not one is excluded. The earth as well as the sun and the stars is held in the all-encompassing arms of its power and gentleness. As Miss A. A. Proctor has said,—

> "Above God's world bends Heaven,
> With day's kiss pure and bright,
> Or folds her still more fondly
> In the tender shade of night;
> And she casts back Heaven's sweetness,
> In fragrant love and light."

What an emblem is this of *the universal and individual Love of the great Father*—'the Father of the spirits of all flesh'! His love is all-embracing. He is the Divine Lover of all the angelic races in the heavens, and also of the human family upon earth. God loves 'the world,' and every creature wearing the human form is precious in His sight and dear to His heart. While regarding humanity as a whole with the boundless compassion of an infinite pity, He also loves every individual of the race, and willeth not the death of any sinner, but rather that he would turn unto Him and live. Of all this we are fully assured, for has not Christ told us that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' The Son died 'the just for the unjust,' and not for our sins only, but 'also for the sins of the whole world.' And when men believe, receive and reciprocate the Divine love, then the Saviour says to them, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.' This is a glorious assurance, for the love of the

Father to His reconciled children is no longer the love of a pitiful compassion, but the satisfied and rejoicing love of a delighted complacency. 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.'

5. *The sky is exquisitely beautiful.* Every person thinks so. The sage and the savage, the philosopher and the peasant, the old and the young, are all agreed about this. It has neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. We all instinctively exclaim, as we gaze into its azure depths, How beautiful! And yet the beauty of the sky is only a far-off shadow of *the absolute beauty of God.* He is the Supreme Loveliness, 'the altogether lovely.' He is lovely in His nature which is Love, lovely in His character which is perfectly holy, and lovely in all His works and ways which are unspeakably charming, harmonious and good. It is impossible to conceive of anything lovelier than Love, and 'God is love.' All His perfections are the attributes of Love, and every beautiful thing in the universe is an emanation from and a manifesta-

tion of the beauty of God. The Divine Love was most fully revealed, and His Loveliness most perfectly manifested, in and by Jesus Christ. He was the incarnate embodiment of the Perfect Love, and also the personal exhibition of the Perfect Loveliness—'God manifested in flesh.' 'He that hath seen me,' said Jesus, 'hath seen the Father,' and 'he that knoweth the Son knoweth the Father also.' So long as the minds of men are blinded by sin and their hearts defiled by moral uncleanness, they are unable to apprehend the Divine beauty, and have no longings for the Divine love. But when they permit the eyes of their hearts to be opened by the Divine Word and Spirit, and the fountain of their moral nature to be cleansed by the great Purifier, then do they see, and with ever-increasing clearness, the greatness of God's Love, and have the blissful desire awakened within them to become partakers of His Loveliness. Ay! and His love and loveliness will become theirs, just in proportion as they believe His gospel, receive His Spirit, and appropriate His grace. The pure crave for purity, and loving hearts for more love. 'The pure in heart shall see God,'

and realize more and more fully for evermore the *attractiveness* of the Divine nature and character. And not only so, but they will also be impelled to pray, 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,' and as their prayer is graciously and freely answered, they themselves will become increasingly the joyful recipients of the Divine love, and partakers of the Divine loveliness, until at last when their nature and character are perfected they shall be all love and altogether lovely, like the Christ of God and God Himself. Meanwhile, as the sky enfolds every sun, planet and star in its tender embrace, so likewise does the Divine Father put the strong arms of His compassion and power around every one of His children. And while breathing His own sweet peace into believing and loving hearts, He gently soothes their fears and encourages their faith, by reminding them of the assurance, 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and *underneath are the everlasting arms.*' The tender enfolding of the infinite love, is like the all-embracing affection of a mother, or the encompassing arms of the universal ether. 'The eternal God, *rideth in His excellency on the sky.*'

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUN AS A SYMBOL

APART from all the astonishing facts concerning the Sun which science has discovered and made known, the great orb of day merely as an object of contemplation is grandly glorious. To the seer and the savage, the philosopher and the peasant, it is alike great and wonderful. In many ages and by many peoples it has even been worshipped as a god. In ancient times the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the fire-worshippers of Persia adored the sun. And of all the idols of heathendom, it was surely the most refined and exalted. Even the Jews in the days of Ezekiel were guilty of this form of idolatry. Although they had been expressly commanded not to bow the knee to any of the orbs of heaven, yet in periods of national backsliding and moral degeneracy they fell into the practices of surrounding heathen nations.

But while the sun may not be worshipped, it is at least the sublime and suggestive symbol of the Worshipful One, by whom it was created.

We have seen that the Sky is a perfect and most beautiful symbol of the Great Infinite Spirit, and now we shall see with equal clearness of apprehension that *the Sun is a symbol of Christ.* Everything that the sun is to the heavens and the earth, so is the Son of the Father and the Son of Man to God and to humanity. Think first, of *His relationship to God.* As the natural S-u-n is in the bosom of the Sky, so is the Divine S-o-n in the bosom of the Father. The sun is the great illuminator of the solar system of which it is the centre, and the Visible God is the Supreme Revealer of the Invisible God to the great moral universe of which He is the Head. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Think also, of *His relationship to men.* All that the sun is to the earth, so is the Saviour of mankind to every believing soul. The functions fulfilled by the one are exactly analogous to those accomplished by the other.

The rising of the sun upon the earth morning by morning is a gradual process. Have you ever awaited its coming and the dawning of its light from the summit of some lofty mountain like the Righi in Switzerland? If not, you have yet to behold one of the sublimest and most soul-inspiring spectacles which Nature presents to the admiring gaze of mortals. Who that has thoughtfully observed the ever-increasing glory of a clear summer morning, can forget the exquisite development of the light? First of all a faint rosy flush becomes perceptible on the eastern horizon, so exceedingly ethereal and delicate that you can scarcely detect it. Shortly after, you observe that it has deepened. The tints are of a stronger hue, and the streaks upon the sky more defined. Yet a little while and a gentle brightness steals over the face of the firmament; the stars, "whose death is day," become paler overhead, and the shadows begin to fade from the landscape. This gradual process of the decrease of darkness and the increase of light continues, till the grey twilight makes every object visible. At length the great king of day appears above the horizon, and the mountain

tops are bathed in golden splendour. Lower and lower does the light descend, till it falls on wood and plain, on stream and sea. The flowers awake, with dewy tears in their eyes, to greet the return of the sunshine, open their innermost bosoms to its quickening, beautifying, and vitalizing rays, and exhale their delicious fragrances into the morning air like incense of adoring worship. The birds also awake, and with their sweet, harmonious, and delightful songs fill the woods, gardens and groves with strains of sweetest melody. The world is now a charming scene of splendour and loveliness under the mighty and transforming power of the great solar king.

> "Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
> With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
> When first on this delightful land he spreads
> His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit and flower,
> Glistering with dew."

Now *all this is beautifully symbolic of the coming of Christ in three aspects. First*, it symbolizes His comings *as the Creator.* Man was familiar with the Creator as the God-Man from the beginning, and had he kept his first estate his

knowledge of the Lord would have been an everlasting development, because the Visible God as the Divine Sun would have gradually risen upon him in manifestation and revelation, and made his path—like that of the shining light—to shine more and more unto the perfect day. *Second*, it symbolizes His coming *as a Redeemer*. His incarnate life in the flesh was also a gradual development. Many prophecies and foreshadowings of His advent had been given in ancient times, and at length He came. He first appeared as a little babe in Bethlehem, and then in the lowly home in Nazareth grew in stature and wisdom and in favour with God and men until He attained to the fulness of physical manhood. And in the years of His public ministry He rose upon the world like the dawning of the day, for it too was a development. In His words and works, teachings and miracles, it is easy to trace the growth of His self-revelation to men, by which He became 'a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel.' And now, as the risen and highly-exalted One, He has reached the zenith of the all-embracing firmament of His majesty and power,

and from thence He will continue with ever-increasing fulness to shed the brightness of His wisdom and the warmth of His love upon humanity, until the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. *Third*, it symbolizes His coming *as a Saviour*. The rising of Christ is a gradual process in every true believer. Christians can testify this from experience. Their 'knowledge grows from more to more.' They are all learning, though by slow degrees it may be, to apprehend the nature, character, and love of their Saviour and Lord. And as these are Divine as well as human, it will be everlastingly true that they surpass knowledge. They can never be fully known and comprehended, even in eternity. Christ will continue to rise in the sky of the soul for ever and ever, and therefore the progress of those who love Him shall never cease.

The natural sun, is the great giver of Light. When he is not shining upon our side of the globe, our hemisphere is in darkness. Even while the moon and stars look down in splendour from the firmament, it is night still. In like manner, *when Christ is not known*, mental darkness and moral gloom overshadow the human

soul and spirit. Think of the great world of Heathendom to-day, with all its fearful ignorance, superstition, demon-worship, degradation and misery, and have you not there a perfect midnight resting upon hundreds of millions of our race? Many ancient sages and wise philosophers tried their uttermost to dispel the darkness in which they lived and suffered, speculated and died, but though they shone like brilliant stars in the mental firmament, it was night still. And what of any individual, now living in ignorance of Christ and His Gospel? We are not forgetful of the fact that there is a light from God which lighteth every man that cometh into the world—the light of reason, conscience and common sense. But that light cannot illumine the human spirit lying dark and dormant in the embrace of sin and moral corruption. The highest part of a man's nature remains as in a gloomy prison house, under the influence of that dim and uncertain light which is merely natural. It requires a Divine luminary to enlighten and quicken it, and enable it to walk abroad and rejoice in the sunlight of God and Eternity. That great light has come to us in the person

of Him who said, 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' 'I am the Truth.' Whatever else any man may know, if he knows not the Christ of God—the great Revealer—'the Wisdom of God'—he is still walking in darkness, and is ignorant of all the truths and experiences which most vitally concern him as a moral and spiritual being to apprehend and realize. Being ignorant of Christ, he must necessarily be ignorant of God, for 'no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' And not knowing God, he does not know himself, for how can any man rightly apprehend his own origin, nature, character and destiny until he apprehends God? Just as the earth is covered with gloom, when the sun is absent, so likewise must every human spirit continue in spiritual darkness and death until it embraces Christ. But all men who truly know Christ and love Him and live in the light of His gospel can joyfully exclaim, 'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.' They live in a new world of beauty and

blessedness since they believed the testimony of Jesus, and not only understand something of their own origin and nature, character and destiny, but also apprehend with ever-increasing clearness the nature and character of God, 'whom to know is life eternal.' But alas! there are many gospel-hearers who have not yet seen the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Instead of being the children of the light and of the day, they still belong to the night and the darkness. 'And this is their condemnation, that light has come into the world, but they love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil.' Their souls are full of darkness; their works are the unfruitful works of darkness, and the final end and issue of their way is 'the blackness of darkness.' Would to God that all such were translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, that the pathway of their life, like that of the shining light, might shine more and more unto the perfect day, when there shall be no darkness at all.

The natural sun is also the great giver of Life. There is no natural life which does not come

from his bosom. It is by his beams that the life of flowers and trees and all growing things is quickened in springtime, and made to appear in manifold forms of loveliness. It is by his beams that their quickened life is developed in the glorious season of summer into fulness of growth. And it is by his beams that all perfected growths are mellowed into ripeness in the golden days of autumn. In short, the sun is the source of all natural beauty and blessing, fruitfulness and joy. And, in like manner, *Christ is the giver of all spiritual Life.* 'I am come,' He said, 'that men might have life, and might have it more abundantly.' 'The life was manifested,' says John the beloved, 'and we have seen and bear witness, and show unto you the eternal life who was with the Father and was manifested unto us.' With God is 'the fountain of life,' and the Incarnate Son has become the channel of that new life to fallen humanity. 'This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' When Jesus is received as a Saviour, He brings a springtime of spiritual quickening into the believing spirit. And as the believer continues to receive Him more and more

fully, through the appropriation of His words and Spirit, He intensifies and develops the new life into beauty and joy, fragrance and fruitfulness. 'He that hath the Son of God hath the life.' The genuine and growing Christian becomes clothed with virtues and graces, like the earth with flowers, and all of them outbreathe upon the world's atmosphere the sweet and refreshing perfume of a Christian and Christlike character. He puts on moral loveliness and becomes in measure a reflection of the beauty of God. His feelings burst into praise like the joyous birds into song; all his affections open into blossom like the buds on the trees; his daily life becomes more and more fruitful in well-doing, and finds embodiment in good works as well as in holy living. May God constrain and help all His saved children to receive with ever-increasing fulness the life which is in Christ! What is that life in its essence? It is love, for love is life. Ay! it is God's own life, for 'God is love.' It is also the true life of man, for he, as a son of God, was meant to possess and enjoy the life of his Father. He had it at first, but lost it when he sinned and went away into the far-off sphere

of moral alienation. Like the earth in autumn and winter, he turned himself away from the great source of light and life and went down into darkness, desolation and spiritual death. And in that wintry condition he must remain until he turns his heart towards Christ as the earth turns to the sun in the seasons of spring and summer. But when he does thus turn, a glorious transformation is progressively effected. The beams of the Divine Love-Sun arise upon him with healing under their wings. His mind is spiritually enlightened, his heart purified and enlarged, and his spirit quickened into newness of life. He becomes a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and by the might of His renewing influence a holy love is enkindled and intensified within him, a love which evolves as its natural products all the powers and graces of the Christian life. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love,' and then out of that love,—like the colours of the rainbow out of pure white light,—there come all the virtues enumerated by Paul,—'joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance.' A truly Christian life is not only spiritual in itself, but it is also a great spiritual-

izer, and uplifts the daily natural life into the sphere of the spiritual, by infusing Christian principle and purpose into all its doings. The secular becomes a golden cup into which the wine of the new life is poured, and out of which not only the Christian himself, but also many others, may drink for the strengthening and refreshment of their higher nature. This is the blessed life—a life which will continue to become more and more blessed for evermore.

The natural sun is the great glorifier. Every visible object which he illumines and vitalizes, he also glorifies. Look, for instance, at the fruit-trees in garden or orchard. In the season of spring he glorifies their quickened life, by giving it manifestation in foliage, and buds and blossoms. The branches of all the blossoming trees, but especially those of the apple trees, are then like little rainbows, and the trees themselves immense bouquets. All through the glowing months of summer he intensifies the life he has quickened, and thereby develops the fruit upon their branches. And then, in the golden days of autumn, he matures and ripens the fruit, and makes it charmingly beautiful by adorning it

with the most exquisite colours. In like manner the wheat, the corn, and all the other products of the field are inwardly quickened and strengthened and outwardly developed, until in the waning radiance of the advancing year they are finally perfected and made beautiful exceedingly. The sunny seasons are then crowned with goodness, and all their rich beneficence lavishly glorified. And what is true of the garden, orchard, and field is true of the whole world. The sun is a universal blessing, for 'there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' Under his influence the face of the earth is renewed in every spring season; all its growths are developed in the long summer days, and then at last, they are fully matured, ripened, and glorified in the mellow autumn splendour. The actinism of his beams is a great transformer. Now, just as the sun glorifies the growths of Nature, so *Christ glorifies every human being who lives in the sphere of the spiritual.* That sphere is the realm of love—love received, love reciprocated, and love manifested. He begins the process by first of all quickening the dormant spirit; the process is continued by intensifying the new

spiritual life, and by forming and developing a truly Christlike character, and then He gives to that character, when embodied and manifested in speech and action, a beauty which is glorious. 'The Lord God is a sun'—'the Sun of Righteousness,' and the sun of all suns; 'He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' He first bestows the grace which forms and develops inward goodness, and then outwardly arrays and adorns the goodness with present and eternal glory. Something of that spiritual splendour is visible even now, in all truly Christian men and women. It shines in their faces, glows in their words, and radiates from their actions. It has often been seen with admiring wonder on the paling countenances and in the broken utterances of departing saints, whose last looks and words were radiantly beautiful like the fading clouds in the western sky at the evening hour, when irradiated with all the resplendent glories of the setting sun. And in the great hereafter it shall be seen in all its fulness and loveliness, when through the spiritual bodies of the redeemed the hidden moral character shall visibly outshine and

clothe them with glory, for 'they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' The white robes of the redeemed in Heaven are even now being woven in the loom of Christian character, and are moral in their nature, for are we not told in the book of the Revelation that 'the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints'?

CHAPTER IX

THE MOON AND OTHER PLANETS AS SYMBOLS

Of all the planets the Moon is nearest to the earth, and is therefore an object of peculiar interest in the midnight firmament, whether seen in different phases through the ever-changing clouds or in full-orbed splendour in a cloudless sky. We have often tried to imagine the thoughts and feelings of *the first man* as he gazed with innocent heart, intelligent mind, and admiring wonder, on the marvellous phenomena of the heavens. As the evening of his first day in Eden drew on he must surely—if left to his own thoughts and imaginings—have been filled with many questionings when the glorious sun slowly sank below the western horizon, and the shades of twilight gathered over the face of the earth, until the darkness of the night hid the entire landscape from his view. We can fancy him realizing, not a feeling of fear, but a feeling

of regret, at losing the bright, golden light and all the manifold beauties of the earth which that light had revealed. It may be he did not know that the gathering gloom would only be of short duration, and speedily dispelled by the returning glories of a new day. He might naturally have imagined—if not told to the contrary by the Creator Himself, or some angel from one of the heavens—that the sun, the trees, the flowers, and the glades of living green, had all passed away permanently from his view. And as the deepening darkness hid them in its murky bosom, we can picture him standing on some eminence in Eden, gazing wistfully upon the fading vision, and experiencing a strange emotion. But by-and-by, looking up from the earth to the sky, he beholds with new wonder, admiration, and gladness a multitude of stars coming into sight, and filling the whole visible firmament with unimagined splendour. It is fast being studded with sparkling gems beaming with soft effulgence, and adorning the blue vault with their twinkling glories. And lo! on the eastern horizon there also appears a strange brightness, greater than that of the stars, which at once

engages his attention, excites his imagination, and exercises his thoughts. As he watches with eager interest and deepening wonder the steadily increasing radiance, the Moon slowly comes into view, and sheds a subdued silvery light over the face of the landscape, giving it new charms and a softer and sweeter aspect. And thus he found that the very darkness which had gathered around him, instead of bringing to him a great loss and largely beclouding his happiness, had opened up a new universe of beauty and grandeur to his sight, and given him a greatly extended revelation of God and the creation, by which his experience was enlarged and the joy of his life intensified. *It is often thus with all godly men.* They are cast at times into afflictions and trials which may cause them much perplexity, but being truly Christian, their sufferings will be sanctified and issue in joy. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' The night of tribulation which hides the earth and its beauties brings all the glories of the heavenly firmament into view, by which the sons and daughters of sorrow obtain an enlarged vision of the Divine mercy and love, and a

deeper spiritual experience. And when God's gracious purpose in their trials has been clearly unveiled and apprehended, and the comfort of all His precious promises—which shine in the firmament of His word like stars on the forehead of the night—has been appropriated, then are they able, with a grateful gladness, 'to glory in tribulations also,' and after their removal to exclaim, 'It is good for us that we were afflicted.'

But suppose that man had never sinned, and therefore never suffered, what great spiritual lessons could he have learned from the Moon? Being morally free he was fallible, and must have continued to be so until he had formed and developed a God-like moral character, and become principled and settled in holiness. During the process of this development, his safety and happiness lay in turning his heart more and more fully in faith and love to his Lord. As he continued to do so his character would have grown brighter and brighter, and his blessedness become deeper and deeper. But if he turned himself away from the Sun of his life, then darkness and desolation must come upon him and spiritual death ensue. As he observed the

waxing and waning of the moon, because of its changing relationship to the sun, surely he must have learnt these great lessons. But alas! he became disloyal to his Creator, and waned—like the moon—into the utter darkness of death. Blessed be God! our fallen race has been gloriously redeemed by the incarnate Son of the Eternal Father; and now it is possible for every hearer of the Gospel to turn to the glorified Saviour in faith and love, and from that moment to receive and reflect, with constantly increasing fulness, the glory of the Lord. 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.'

Now, *what is the relation of the Moon to the sun and the earth?* It receives the light of the former, and then reflects that light upon the latter, when the sun is absent. The moon in itself is non-luminous, and shines with a radiance which is not its own: its light and glory are given to it by the sun. But it does not absorb all the sunshine it receives, and retain it only for its own enlightenment and use. On the contrary, it freely dispenses the brightness it obtains, and often transforms the darkness of night into the radiance of a milder day. *It may therefore be*

fairly taken as a symbol of everything which receives and then reflects the wisdom and love of God, as these are radiated from the face of Jesus Christ, who is the Divine Sun in the great spiritual firmament. Here, again, we shall deal only with facts which every intelligent reader will recognise to be real, and have nothing to do with fanciful resemblances about which it would be possible to dispute.

1. *The moon is a symbol of the sacred Scriptures.* They are full of Christ. We find Him as the Creator in the first chapter of Genesis, and as Redeemer, Saviour, Judge, and King, in the closing chapters of Revelation. He is the Soul of History, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Subject of the Gospels, the Theme of the Epistles, the essence and significance of the entire Bible. And the mission of the Book is to reflect His glory upon the marching generations of mankind, in the absence of the visible Christ, and impel them to think of Him and long for His personal appearing. As Dr. George Macdonald, in one of his *Unspoken Sermons*, has beautifully said, "The one use of the Bible is to make us look at Jesus, that through Him we

might know His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Till we thus know Him, *let us hold the Bible dear as the moon of our darkness* by which we travel towards the east; not dear as the sun whence her light cometh and towards which we haste, that, walking in the light of the Sun Himself, we may no more need the mirror that reflected His absent brightness."

2. *The Moon is also a symbol of the Christian Church.* What is the Church? It is very extraordinary and extremely saddening that near to the end of the nineteenth century this question still requires to be asked and answered. Not that the Scriptures have left the answer in darkness and uncertainty, but because the indifference and consequent ignorance of many persons on the one hand have not apprehended it, and the pride and selfish exclusiveness of a man-made priesthood on the other have wilfully and wickedly perverted it. There are many and widely different churches in Christendom, and each of them — but especially the larger and more powerful of the number — is constantly engaged in the ignoble and most unworthy effort

to show that it is the only true church, and that all others are schismatic and false. A very unseemly and injurious strife is almost always going on between the contending parties—a strife which arises out of ignorance, vanity, selfishness, and a thoroughly anti-Christian spirit. The combatants manifest zeal without knowledge, and are often far more eager to preserve, protect, and advance the interests of their ism, than to 'maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.' Let it be clearly understood that all the churches as organized ecclesiasticisms are men-devised institutions, and not the Church of Christ. He did not originate the Greek church, nor the Latin church, nor the Anglican church, nor any other denominational church whatsoever. None of these had any existence till centuries after His Ascension. We must go back to the days of the apostles to see what the Church really was, for what it then was it still is. The Church is often spoken of in the book of the Acts—what was the Church? We are told that Saul (Paul) 'made havoc of the Church'—what was the Church of which he made havoc? It was not any one of the churches to which we have just referred, for they had not

been created. *The one true Church of which Christ is the Head, is the Brotherhood of Believers in Him.* All others are of purely human origin, and are corrupt, schismatic, and untrue. Every human being in the world, who has truly believed the gospel, accepted Christ as a Saviour, received the Holy Ghost, and become a reconciled child of the Divine Father, is a member of the Christian Church, and 'the Lord knoweth them who are His.' True Christians in all the churches, and outside of all the churches, belong to the one true Church, and ought to live and love as brethren. If all of them did but clearly recognise this fact and honour their standing in Christ, they would 'love the brotherhood,' obey 'the new commandment' of their Lord, and seek the fulfilment of His prayer, 'That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' Alas! alas! the world to-day is still largely alienated from Christ, and more we believe because of the mutual alienations and divisions of Christians than from almost any other external cause whatsoever. And what has thus separated them and

kept them asunder, but the baleful and blighting power of a worldly ecclesiasticism? The Greek church denounces the Latin church, and the Latin church the Anglican, and the Anglican proudly looks down upon, cynically despises, and often unmercifully boycots Dissenters, as very many in the country districts in England know by painful experience. It is a sorry spectacle, and unspeakably injurious to both the Church and the world. There are many who believe that while a perfect Gospel was given to the world by Christ and His apostles, they did not leave behind them *a perfect Church*, but only a germ which required development. But this is a mere assumption which has no warrant in the New Testament, and which leaves the door wide open to the entrance of human imaginations and earthly ambitions by which the beautiful simplicity of the primitive Church has been terribly obscured and corrupted. In the days of the apostles the Church was the believing Brotherhood, and every community of Christians a section of the Church. Its offices, too, were appointed, and amongst them there was no priesthood in any special sense, for the simple reason that the entire

Brotherhood was 'a royal priesthood' ordained to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God. As Dr. Lightfoot truly says, "In the records of the apostolic churches, the sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon their officers. The only priests under the gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian Brotherhood. As individuals, all Christians are alike." The officers were Bishops (also called Presbyters and Elders) and Deacons, who are never called priests, for where a priest is there must also be an altar and a sacrifice, and neither of these has any place in the New Testament dispensation (Heb. x. 12–14, and 1 Peter ii. 5). Let all earnest-souled Christian people cease to exalt and honour the isms of men, that they may truly honour and build up the Church of Christ, and do their utmost by prayer and precept, example and effort, to bring all unholy rivalries and unworthy jealousies to a perpetual end, and impel the world, as in the ancient days, to exclaim, 'See how these Christians love one another.'

The Christian Church—like the moon—*receives all its light from the sun.* 'The Sun of righteous-

ness' has risen upon it, 'with healing under his wings.' Christ is the great Enlightener. All His followers know this to be true. The light He has brought has not only given them intellectual illumination, but also spiritual wisdom. And out of their spiritual life—which is a life of faith and love, obedience and service—they are acquiring more and more fully the light of a blissful experience, which is 'the light of life.' Said Jesus, 'My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me: if any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' In the spiritual sphere of life, the only real knowledge is the knowledge of experience. God is love, and love can be truly known, only when it is believed, received, and reciprocated. In other words, it is really understood not by the intellect but only by the heart, and even by the heart just to the extent that it is welcomed, cherished, and manifested. And surely! *the waxing brightness of the moon* is a beautiful and most instructive emblem of the spiritual development of the Christian. Newly converted souls have just begun to turn the faces of their hearts to Christ, and receive a little of His glory. If

they still continue to turn, and are steadily progressive Christians, they will shine more and more fully and brightly with His radiance. Worldly and non-progressive Christians are like the moon in one of its earlier phases, and in that phase they remain, if they do not really wane. None but the earnest and whole-hearted lover of Christ can go on from phase to phase, and from glory to glory, towards the full-orbed splendour of that Christian perfection, to which every believer in Jesus should seek to attain.

But while the Church receives light, *it also gives it.* Like the moon, it is a great reflector. It gets all its light from Christ — the Divine Love-Sun — and then reflects that light upon mankind in His absence. God's call to the ancient Church was this, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; for, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.' And when at length He came as the incarnate Revealer of God and Redeemer of men, He said to His disciples, and through them to all His followers in all time,

'Ye are the light of the world; let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' This injunction is laid upon every Christian, because the Church is composed of individual believers, so that whatsoever command is given to it is given to them. Every Christian is divinely expected to shine as a light in the world, by reflecting the glory of Christ. If only we have the light of truth beaming upon us, and the fire of love burning within us, we are certain to shine. May we seek to be intelligent Christians, and shine with the light of knowledge; pure-hearted Christians, that we may shine with the light of holiness; active and earnest Christians, that we may shine with the light of well-doing; and consistent Christians, that the light which we radiate may be clear, steady, and enduring.

As the moon waxes and wanes, so also does the Church. We thank God that through all the ages of the Christian era it has shone more or less brightly upon all the passing generations of men; but weak and variable in her faith and love, she has not always shone with equal bril-

liancy. In times of reformation and revival she has turned her eyes to the face of the glorified Saviour and brightly reflected His splendour; but at other times she has become careless, prayerless, and worldly, turned away both her heart and face from her Lord, and but dimly and partially manifested His light and His love. In primitive times when her faith was strong and her love fervent, she shone with marvellous brightness, and largely scattered the spiritual darkness which lay upon the nations of mankind. But from that fatal day when Constantine united her with the State, with all its worldly and corrupting power, she began to wane in her brightness—as history abundantly testifies—until she almost ceased to shine, and the awful darkness of the middle ages brooded over Christendom—a darkness which could be felt. Since the times of Huss and Wycliffe, Luther and Knox, she has once more in measure turned to the Saviour, and in the light of His countenance has shone upon the world. May she continue to turn more and more fully to Him, and increasingly reflect the heavenly glory of His Divine wisdom and love!

As the moon sometimes eclipses the sun, so has the Church frequently eclipsed Christ. When the moon in a direct line comes in between the earth and the sun, then the glory of the sun is obscured, if not altogether hidden. And when any church puts herself between human souls and their Saviour, then she darkens the glory of His face. This is just what the church of Rome has long done, and is still doing. By keeping back the Bible from the people, setting up Pope and priest between them and their Lord, and establishing a system of Mariolatry and devotion to saints (many of them of very questionable saintliness), she has largely hidden from view the glory of the great Head of the Church. Wherever Popery prevails the brightness of Christ is eclipsed, and the gross darkness of a superstitious ignorance settles upon the minds and hearts of the people. No unprejudiced and intelligent person, can possibly deny this. Compare Ireland with Wales, Spain with Scotland, France with England, and the Catholic cantons of Switzerland with those which are Protestant, and abundant evidence will be found to confirm the statements we have made. And the Angli-

can church, though in a smaller degree, is also guilty of the same fearful sin of hiding the glory of the Saviour. As Ritualism spreads, and a men-made priesthood — unknown to the New Testament—increases its claims and pretensions, the church is exalted and honoured and the Christ removed to a greater distance from men. When priests, altars, sacrifices, and ceremonies stand between souls and their Saviour, they tend to obscure the face of His glory and hide its beauty from men. Let History testify to that! It is wonderful to hear, how the church is sometimes extolled by churchmen. They talk as if Episcopacy had been Christ's grandest revelation to humanity, and He Himself were the supreme Episcopalian, which indeed He must be if their church is the true Church—the only Church—for is He not the Head of His Church? Ah! when they come to see that His Church is the brotherhood of believers, and not any elaborately organized institution on the face of the earth, and that neither the polity of a church nor its officers constitute the Church itself, and therefore ought never to form a bar to communion with other churches, they will be ashamed of

their proud and exclusive churchmanship, and recognise the fact that all real lovers of Christ and the brethren, whether or not they belong to any Christian community, are members of the true Church. The Anglican church, which boasted so long and loudly that it was "the bulwark of Protestantism," is fast ceasing to be Protestant, and in the persons of thousands of its "priests" and members is turning its face more and more fully and longingly towards Rome, and this surely is not to turn to Christ. A new Reformation is needed, and it ought to be originated and carried on to a full accomplishment, chiefly by genuine evangelical and protestant Christians within the church itself. God speed the day! But this also must be said, that every church, by whatever name it may be known, is tempted at times to be narrow, exclusive, and bigoted, and forget the new commandment of its Lord. Let Christians everywhere beware of men-made institutions, creeds and isms, and be prayerfully watchful that they do not misrepresent the gospel and obscure the brightness and beauty of the great Light of the world. And still more earnestly may they desire

and endeavour to be holy in heart and life, that they eclipse not the glory of their Saviour.

The Church itself, like the moon, is also sometimes eclipsed. When the earth comes in between the sun and the moon, the shadow of the earth darkens the moon's brightness. In like manner *the earth-spirit* is at times allowed by Christians to fall upon the Church, by which its testimony is weakened and its power in measure destroyed. The unbelief and worldliness of her members obscures her glory. She does not clearly and fully reflect the resplendent beams of the Divine Sun. The Lord hasten the time when His Church shall come out from under every eclipse, and go forth into the world, 'FAIR AS THE MOON'!

But there are many other Planets besides the moon in the great solar system. Some of them are frequently visible to the naked eye, and others are so far distant that they can only be seen through a powerful telescope, yet all of them receive and reflect the brightness of the sun. In like manner, apart from the visible Church now shining upon mankind with spiritual splendour like the waxing Moon, there are

multitudes of the Lord's sanctified ones so far away from us that we can see them only in Bible history or through the telescope of faith. But all of them shone and are now shining in the bright light of the Divine Sun, and gloriously reflecting His radiance. When we trace the history of humanity from the beginning, we find that in every age of the world there have always been some who were lovers of the Lord and doers of righteousness. The saints of Old Testament times knew the Jehovah, either from Divine revelation or from personal and visible manifestation, for He frequently *appeared* as 'the Form of God' (Numbers xii. 8) to patriarchs and prophets, and spake to them as He did to Moses, '*face to face, as a man with his friend*' (Exo. xxxiii. 11). They all received His light, and shone with His glory. And in New Testament ages, from the days of Christ's personal ministry, apostles and martyrs, reformers and confessors, and myriads of humble believers, have not only been enlightened but also made spiritually luminous by the glory of God as it shone in the character and life of the incarnate Saviour, and they shall continue to shine for

ever in the presence of the risen the ascended and glorified Lord. All His redeemed and saved people who have passed away into the Intermediate State are now in His visible presence, receiving in fulness His spiritual life, and in the Heavens of the great Hereafter, when their threefold nature is perfected, they shall eternally radiate, not only moral but also visible brightness and show forth the glory of their Lord. The old command shall never become obsolete, but receive an endless and ever-increasing fulfilment, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.'

CHAPTER X

THE STARS AS SYMBOLS

ASTRONOMERS tell us that all the visible Stars are suns, and that each of them in all likelihood is the centre of a system of orbs invisible to us because of their smaller size and immense distances from the earth. Many of the visible stars are hundreds of times larger than our sun, and yet they appear to us,—not only to the naked eye, but also through the very strongest telescopes, — merely as twinkling points of light. The thought is overwhelming, and impels the devout mind adoringly to exclaim, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty.'

The stars do not belong to our solar system. They are above and beyond the planetary sphere. *Of whom then, are they the symbols?* Here again,—as with the symbols already referred to,—we apply for the answer, not to our

own fancy or imagination but to the Sacred Scriptures. The questions which were Divinely put to the patriarch Job direct our thoughts to the right reply,—'The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, . . . or who laid the corner stone thereof; *when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*'

The stars then are symbols of the angels, and very beautiful and suggestive symbols they are. Consider their points of resemblance. Angels were anterior to man, and do not belong to our race; but as 'sons of God' they were filled with joy and rejoicing when our earth was created and man was formed. They are outside of our human system, and yet are profoundly interested in the history, doings, and destiny of mankind; for are they not all 'ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation'? As the stars minister to the earth, so the angels minister unto men, and both are great in number and power.

The stars are divided into separate systems, and the angels into distinct families, every one differing from every other. There are Angels and Archangels, Seraphs and Cherubim, Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers, and these probably are the titles of only a few of endlessly numerous races of superior beings inhabiting the heavens of God. The Lord is Head of every angelic race ; and because all the angels are filled with His spirit and are constantly imbibing His love, they rejoicingly minister unto men. Oftentimes, like Himself, they visibly appeared in the ancient days and rendered definite and special service to many, but since the redemptive work of the Saviour was finished, His gospel completed, and His Spirit given, their visible services have not often been permitted. If men will not believe the gospel when they read it in the light of Christ's Life and Character, Resurrection and Ascension, and the miracles wrought in His name by the Apostles, neither would they do so though an angel from heaven were to come and assure them of its truth. And God will neither compel men to believe, nor make their responsibility greater than is necessary.

But to all the children of faith, the angels delight to minister. Through all the gospel era they will continue to serve *invisibly*, and their service, we may be sure, is valuable. We know from the manifest blessings which they rendered in the olden times something of what their invisible service is likely to be in the present and future whilst we remain upon the earth. They receive with joy the communications of the Divine will—the will of their own Lord and ours—and then make haste to fulfil them. With all the agility of the winds they fly to do their Creator's errands and execute His high behests. We are told that 'they rest not day nor night' in this worshipful and congenial service. Turning the faces of their hearts continually towards the visible God, they receive into the inmost of their being the inspirations of His wisdom and love, and are always ready and willing to do His bidding. This is true of every rank and order, from the lowest to the highest, for they are all ministering spirits. Love delights to obey and please.

They are 'sent forth to do service.' There is nothing done in the heavens as the result of

creaturely impulse or individual determination, but only according to the will and appointment of the Lord. And because His will is love and is therefore loved and obeyed by all, order universally prevails, while disappointment and unhappiness are impossible and unknown. He sends them forth to minister unto men because He loves the human race, especially the heirs of salvation; and the angels come with alacrity and gladness not only because they are lovers of God, but also because, like God Himself and for His sake, they too are lovers of humanity. All who are precious in His sight are dear to their affections.

To whom do they chiefly, if not exclusively, minister? To 'them that shall inherit salvation.' And who are they? No one who understands God's Word will require to be told that they are believers in and lovers of Christ, and who through vital union with Him by faith have become the reconciled children of the Divine Father. A great redemption for men was wrought out by Jesus; and now a full salvation is freely offered to every hearer of the gospel, and by every human being who accepts the un-

speakable gift a perfect and perpetual salvation shall assuredly be realized, not all at once, but progressively. *It is first of all an internal salvation.* It begins and is continued in the soul and spirit. Look at any man who is a true believer of the gospel and a faithful follower of Christ. He penitently turns away from all known sin and rejoicingly accepts and appropriates Jesus as a Saviour. He passes from death unto life, receives the forgiveness of all his guilt and experiences the peace of conscience and joy of heart which result from a conscious reconciliation to the Father. And day by day, as he seeks to learn of Christ, keep His commandments, imitate His example, and purify himself even as Christ is pure, his mind is enlightened, his heart enlarged, his soul sanctified, his spirit spiritualized and his Christian character developed. And thus the man is inwardly and truly saved because he is built up into Christ and transformed into His image. This is 'a great salvation,' to which every Christian becomes heir. A mere deliverance from guilt, would be in itself a comparatively small matter. Properly understood, the pardon of sin only brings the sinner into a salvable state. *His*

real salvation, is the salvation of himself. The regeneration of his nature and the upbuilding of his character are meant to follow the forgiveness of guilt. Ay! and the more rapidly and thoroughly that the regenerating and upbuilding process is carried on, the quicker will he be really saved, and the more fully the blessings and blessedness of the new life become his to enjoy. *And by-and-by, this internal and hidden salvation shall be followed and crowned by that which is external and visible.* 'When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him *in glory*.' We shall be personally glorified, like the Lord. Our hidden life shall visibly outshine, and our moral character become luminous. We shall be clothed with glory, like a star with light. The inward and the outward shall exactly correspond, ay! and our *environment* shall correspond also, for are we not told that 'an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time'? 'Now is our [full] salvation nearer than when we believed.' 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your

mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the salvation that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Now, unto all who shall be heirs of salvation, the angels are ministering spirits. They not only sing glad songs of praise before the throne over every repentant sinner, but all along the course of a believer's pilgrimage to immortality they act as his guardians, helpers, and friends.

How do they minister, and in what ways do they serve the heirs of salvation? Though invisible to the bodily eyes of corrupted mortality, yet still they are with us. If only our inner eyes were opened, as were those of Elisha's servant, we should see that they are all around and above us eager and ready to befriend. It may be that we are protected from many unseen dangers, and blessed with manifold blessings through their instrumentality. And of this we may be certain that as mind acts upon mind and spirit influences spirit, the angels may speak to our inner being without the use of any material media. We are all conscious of receiving suggestions which are suddenly injected into the soul from without, and which are felt to

be the product of other minds rather than our own. By those which are good we have been instructed, and comforted, warned and guided, and had both our character and life moulded and blessed. It is delightful to believe that we may be indebted for these to the ministry of the holy angels. The more fully that we turn our hearts towards Christ, the more freely will they minister. May we give them opportunity! Let us be tenderly susceptible to their influence, and quickly responsive to their power! As members of the Royal Family of the twice-born, we have princely attendants who serve us in princely style, and all to this glorious end, that we ourselves may be princely, by walking worthy of the high vocation whereunto we are called as sons and daughters of God, and living Christlike lives in the world. And let Christians also *imitate the angels!* If these superior beings, from love to God, Christ, and humanity, minister unto them, may they in turn, for Christ's sake and their fellow creatures' sake, minister unto others. 'This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.' Christianity rightly understood is a genuine

Socialism—not the socialism of selfishness which seeks to obtain that which belongs to others, but the socialism of love, which rejoices freely to give to others that which is its own. It seeks first to establish justice and righteousness upon the earth, and then to manifest a tender charity to all in need. 'To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

CHAPTER XI

THE EARTH AS A SYMBOL

The Earth is the symbol of Man. And an altogether natural, perfect and beautiful symbol it is, as we shall see. An enlightened mind should recognise, not only the relation of Nature to God, but also her relation to man. That relation is close, vital and lasting. The body of the first man was taken from the earth, and every human being is constantly dependent upon her beneficent ministry for all the food, clothing, and material comfort which he receives and enjoys. The sun is the father and the earth the mother, of the physical constitution of man, and as Mother Nature's child, he inherits everything in Nature. Not only so, but there is nothing in her which is not in him, in essence and finality. Mrs. Browning has given expression to this great fact in the following lines :—

> "God collected and resumed in man,
> The firmament, the strata, and the lights,

Fish, fowl, and beast and insect—all their trains
Of various life, caught back upon His arm,
Reorganized and constituted man,
The Microcosm."

And still further, Man is far more than Nature. As the author of *Loyalty to Christ* most truly says, "Nature, with all her vegetative life and her whole round of animal life in the sea, on the land, and in the air, only partially represents Man. In him there are immense planes of intellectual, spiritual and affectional evolution, which Nature knows nothing about." Man is greater than the universe.

And when he was brought into being he was not only the king's son, but also himself a king. He received not only a royal nature as a son of God, but was also divinely placed in a royal position. The great Creator enthroned him as the ruler of this world, and the monarch of all that it contained. The Lord God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' 'The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth

hath He given to the children of men.' It was divinely intended to be their birthplace, their nursery, their school, their home, and their temple, and also that they should see in all its phenomena, operations, and results, images and emblems of their own life, experience, and character. And had they never become corrupt and blind, through the blighting influence of moral evil, they would have seen, and with ever fuller vision, in all natural objects some aspect of themselves. But in their fallen and degraded condition they largely lost sight of Nature as a great book of symbols, and required to have their eyes divinely opened and their spiritual vision divinely purified, to behold in the face of Nature, as in a beautiful mirror, shadows of their own nature and character. It is the mission of the Word and Spirit of God thus to enlighten and unveil, and just as the written revelation is increasingly studied and understood, appreciated and applied, so will the great book of symbols be apprehended and admired. When the sublime teachings of Nature are rightly recognised, they are seen to be in perfect harmony with the glorious gospel of Christ, and unite with it in

furthering the intellectual, moral, and social salvation of humanity, and the spiritual development of individual Christian men. Therefore, says Scripture, 'Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee,' and naturally so, for the earth is the symbol of man.

The first great truth which the earth seems to teach is this, *its absolute dependence upon heavenly ministry.* All its fertility, beauty, and fruitfulness are the results of the gifts bestowed upon it by the sky and the sun, the moon and other planets, the stars, the clouds, the rain, the dew, and the wind. If their purifying, enlightening, warming, and fertilizing influences were withheld, even for a brief period, the earth would speedily go down into utter barrenness and desolation, and become a universal desert and dreary waste of sand. In its relation to the natural heavens, men may see a wonderful representation of their own individual relation to the spiritual heavens, and in its ever-varying conditions a faithful and striking emblematic display of their own natural and spiritual states. *They too are absolutely dependent*, for life itself, and also for everything which sustains life and makes it enjoyable. As

the earth must constantly receive from the natural heavens, if it is to be fertile and fair, so likewise must all men continually receive from the spiritual heavens, if spiritual life is to be quickened within them and that life developed into beauty and fruitfulness. The manifold ministry of the infinite love and inexhaustible grace of God is ready to be freely bestowed upon all who are ready to receive it ; and just to the extent that it is appropriated and rightly used, to that extent will their higher life be intensified, their nature enriched, their moral character developed, and their daily existence amongst men made truly useful.

Consider next *the seasons of the year* and what they are fitted and designed to teach concerning the natural and spiritual life of man. Look at them first *as symbols of his natural and earthly existence.* The sweet season of Spring, with its lovely flowers, opening blossoms, and thrilling songs, is universally regarded as an emblem of childhood, with all its charming innocence exquisite loveliness and exuberant joy. The ardent Summer, with its fervent warmth and rapid growth, is typical of youth with all its impulsive

energies and eager desires. The mellow Autumn, with its sôftened light and ripened fruits, speaks of a fully matured manhood and of all the gathered treasures which it has acquired. And then gloomy Winter, with its frost and snow and shortening days, is pathetically emblematic of old age slowly fading away and consciously going down into the valley of the shadow. As all our poets, philosophers and preachers have observed and taught, the rolling year, with its everchanging seasons, is beautifully representative of the natural life of man. *But the seasons are also representative of his higher life—the spiritual.* This is a truth which has not been so generally and clearly apprehended. When we speak of the symbols of man's higher being, we must begin, not with spring but with winter; and why? Because he does not enter into the possession of spiritual life through the portals of a merely natural birth. To obtain that life, he must be 'born again,' not of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. This higher life, can never be attained through the evolution of that which is lower. Because of his fallen condition every human being commences his natural existence

with a dormant spirit in his bosom, ay! and dormant it must remain until it is divinely quickened into 'newness of life.' It then begins a blissful career of development, activity, and usefulness which shall never end. The *natural* life passes from spring into summer, from summer into autumn, and then goes down into the winter of cool blood, hoary hairs, feeble footsteps, and ever-increasing decay which ends in dissolution, but the *spiritual* life which began in winter shall never go down into another winter, either in time or in eternity, for 'He that believeth and liveth in me,' said Jesus, 'shall never die.' An everlasting spring, summer, and autumn shall abide together in his happy bosom, manifesting beauties and bringing forth fruits for evermore. All this will be seen much more clearly when we come to consider the seasons separately and in detail.

A large portion of the earth is not land but water, and it too is symbolical. *The seas and rivers are symbols of man's emotional nature, and represent the feelings and affections of the heart.* There is nothing fanciful in this declaration, as some of our readers may at first be in-

clined to imagine. We are still dealing with facts, which ingenuity on our part has not created. We shall strain nothing to suit a purpose, but simply point out as clearly and briefly as we can the symbolic teachings of the changeful objects with which we have now to deal.

Look first at *the tides of the sea.* How restless they are! They are always ebbing and flowing. And is it not likewise thus, with man's *emotional* nature? How changeful his feelings are! at one time joyous, genial and generous, and at another sorrowful, gloomy and severe. But all this varicty of feeling is healthy in its effect, if only it is controlled and guided by moral principle and heavenly grace, even as the tides are governed by the immutable laws of infinite wisdom, operating through the influence of the orbs of heaven. By their constant ebbings and flowings, the tides of the sea and the emotions of the heart keep the waters of the great deeps from stagnation and putrefaction. Their ministry is exactly similar.

Think next of *the storms which so frequently rise and rage on the bosom of the ocean.* How are they produced? Are they not all created

by the *wind*? The wind is the producer of all the commotions, which agitate the bosom of the ocean. This is a fact which ought to be noted and remembered, because it is fitted to teach great and important moral lessons. Ordinary winds gently stir the surface of the waters, but when the tempest and tornado, the whirlwind and hurricane sweep over the face of the deep, they raise its waves on high, increase them into billows, and lash them into driving fury and whirling foam. *And are not all the stirrings and tempests of the human heart created in like manner by wind*—the wind of faithful, gracious and moving human utterance, or the wind of angry speech, or the wind of God's Word when it blows upon the conscience and the heart? There are blissful agitations, which strengthen and purify the soul and end in a holy calm; and there are others which are corrupting and destructive in their influence, casting up mire and dirt, and not infrequently causing much injury and desolation by their fury. The heart is often stirred into angry passion by words which irritate and inflame, and then the whole being is roused into wild agitation like the sea

in a storm. Let this also be noted, that in the sphere of the natural storms are usually most frequent and dangerous in the season of winter; and so likewise tempests in the bosom are most likely to arise in those persons who are still in an unsaved and wintry condition. Being inwardly restless and dissatisfied, and having no lofty moral principles to guide their thoughts, govern their feelings and control their passions, they are easily excited to anger. The more that the gentle and loving spirit of Jesus Christ is received and cherished by any person, and the high and holy principles of His gospel are allowed to mould the character and rule the conduct, the less liable will he be to be visited and vexed by storms. If at any time, however, he should be agitated in thought and feeling by the winds of evil words, let him come immediately to the great Tempest-queller, who will once more utter the command of power, 'Peace be still,' and lo! there shall be 'a great calm.' And just as the sea on a lovely summer day reflects the glory of the heavens, and under the stars by night sleeps as peacefully as an infant in its cradle bed, so will the inner being of the Christ-

like Christian mirror the face of God and enjoy a heavenly tranquility.

And now, finally, think of *the rivers in relation to the sea.* Under the mighty influence of the sunshine, vapour in large quantities is drawn up from the bosom of the ocean, formed into clouds, carried through the atmosphere by the air-currents, descends in showers of blessing upon the thirsty earth, and when drained from mountain and moor, forest and field, finds its way to the river, and flows in music back to its birthplace and home in the ocean. 'Unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.' What a marvellous circle of wisdom, beauty and beneficence is this! *And what a charming symbol, too, of the activities and experiences of a sanctified soul!* Under the constraining sunshine of a Saviour's love, the desires of the heart—like vapour—ascend in prayer to God on behalf of himself and others, and when these are divinely heard and answered they return in showers of blessing both on him who prayed and on those for whom his prayers were offered. Under the influence of that same constraining love of Christ, his affections go forth in

kind words and helpful deeds, by which—like the falling rain upon the earth—many sad and weary hearts are refreshed and comforted. And what is the blissful personal effect of all such ministry? Sooner or later it will return into the loving bosom from which it emanated—like the river to the sea—with increase of blessing and blessedness. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' but both are blessed, and the greatest givers are always the largest receivers, as Miss Adelaide Proctor has very beautifully shown—

"See the rivers flowing
Downwards to the sea,
Pouring all their treasures
Bountiful and free—
Yet to help their giving
Hidden springs arise;
Or, if need be, showers
Feed them from the skies!

Give thy heart's best treasures—
From fair Nature learn;
Give thy love—and ask not,
Wait not a return!
And the more thou spendest
From thy little store,
With a double bounty,
God will give thee more."

CHAPTER XII

THE CLOUDS AS SYMBOLS

THE clouds are wonderful phenomena. They are as varied and changeful, beautiful and useful as the manifold products of the earth. In form and size, colour and movement they are exceedingly diversified, and are continually assuming new proportions and appearances. Science has classified them, thus: "The *Cirrhus* clouds comprise all the feathery species which float high in the air in fine weather; the *Cumulus* consist of the large mountain-like species, generally seen in summer; the *Stratus* are the horizontal kind, which lie low down on the horizon, and are oftenest seen at sunset; and the *Nimbus* are the rain-clouds of a dark grey or leaden hue, with sharp, well-marked edges." Some one has spoken of clouds as "the floating landscape of the sky," and the description is appropriate, for oftentimes the scenery of the world below seems

to be reflected from the firmament above. Nay, more, an attentive observer of the clouds may frequently see in them such mountains and valleys, hills and far-spreading plains, as he has never gazed upon in any earthly landscape. And their *beauties* are exquisite. Their varied and ever-varying forms are always graceful, and when illumined by sunshine or moonlight or star-rays they are lovely and charming. Especially in the morning and evening twilights of calm summer days, their tints and hues are often unspeakably beautiful, and ought to uplift every devout mind to Him who ordains and adorns them all. And the *uses* of the clouds are just as truly beneficent, as their splendours are attractive. They carry rich blessings in their bosoms wherever they go, and but for their blissful ministry the earth would speedily become barren and unfruitful.

Clouds are products of both heaven and earth. The sun is the father and the water of the earth the mother of them all. *Of what are they the symbols?* Let the Word of God tell us.

In their relation to the sun they are coverings to his face, to keep back from the earth the

blaze of his brightness. Too much sunshine, or sunshine too long continued, is withering and destructive in its influence; hence the need of clouds. They are symbols of the *veils* which the Divine Love-Sun has always worn, to moderate the resplendence of His glory. The great Infinite Spirit dwells in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen *nor can see*, and therefore He needs no veil. But from before creation and for mediatorial ends, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father became the God-Man. He was the 'image of the invisible God, and the first-born of all creation.' As such, He made the angels and man in His own image and likeness, and was familiarly known by them all. *His original humanity, was a cloud.* It veiled the glory of His Divinity, and enabled created beings to have immediate and personal fellowship with Him, such as the first of our race enjoyed in Paradise. He frequently appeared to the patriarchs and prophets of the olden time, and spake to them '*face to face* as a man with his friend.' It was thus that He communed with Abraham and Jacob, with Moses, Joshua

and Manoah, and with the young Hebrew exiles in Babylon when cast into the furnace of fire. To the people of Israel also, all His appearances were veiled with clouds. He went before them in 'a pillar of cloud' through all their wilderness wanderings, and spake to them 'out of a cloud' from the summit of Sinai. And when 'in the fulness of the times' He became the Incarnate One, *His flesh was a cloud.* Only once was He transfigured before His disciples, when His face did shine as the sun and His garments became white as the light, and the vision filled them with awe. And ever afterwards, it was with bated breath though with rejoicing hearts that the three favoured disciples who saw it said, 'We beheld his glory.' It was in mercy to sinful men, that he thus approached them and lived amongst them without the glory.

"The cloud which veileth love, itself is love."

And although in the Heavens His face shines 'above the brightness of the sun,' yet that brightness shall eternally be modified and partially veiled by His humanity, because no created being could look upon the fulness of His Divine glory and live.

In their relation to the earth, clouds are symbols of the feelings and desires of men, which ascend into the sky of the soul like vapour. These feelings and desires are both good and evil. *Think of the evil first.* We have looked upon clouds which were dark, lurid and threatening. The tempests abode in their bosoms. Ascending in vapour from the marshy places of the earth, they darkened the face of the sky, kept back the beams of the sun and made the whole face of the landscape gloomy and uninteresting. And out of their fiery bosoms came at length the scathing lightning flash and the appalling thunder peal. *Are there not many storm-clouds like these in the moral firmament of the soul?* Out of the baleful lusts and passions, tempers and follies, vain ambitions and degraded desires of men, arise clouds of evil—clouds which hide the face of Christ, obstruct the light of His gospel, and threaten to burst into awful thunderstorms of destructive fury. Bad men are 'clouds without water, carried along by winds,' (Jude 12) and are full of lightnings, thunderings and tempests. Their moral influence is blighting and blasting, and when that which is in them comes

forth into open manifestation, it terrifies and appals. Such men at times may stand in awe of themselves, and determine to live and act differently in time to come, but their good resolutions, like the morning cloud and the early dew vanish away, and going from bad to worse, they turn the light of heaven into lightning, and treasure up wrath in their sinful souls against the day of doom. But if, on the contrary, their good resolutions are cherished, and true repentance towards God follows the discovery of their sins, then—under the influence of Divine grace — the thunder-clouds in their bosoms shall melt into showers of penitent sorrow, and a gracious God and Father will say unto them, in words of most blissful assurance 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' *Think also of the good affections and desires* of genuine Christian people, which in nature and purpose are pure and spiritual. They ascend like vapour into the spiritual firmament, and resemble the glory-clouds of a lovely summer day, which while receiving and reflecting the sunshine, radiate the most

brilliant colours, and are beautiful exceedingly. In well-doing and usefulness Christians are like the precious rain-clouds which drop down fatness, make the earth fair and fertile, and crown the year with goodness. And when they come to die, they are like the lovely clouds which gather around the setting sun, lined with purest silver, and fringed with gleaming gold. Their calm trust in God, and their joyful hope of a blissful immortality light their faces with the resplendent glories of eternity and the beauties of the heavenly world. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.'

Clouds are also symbols of richest spiritual blessings. One of the Old Testament psalmists sang thus sweetly concerning them: 'Thy paths drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.' Bless the Lord, O my soul, '*who maketh the clouds his chariot.*'

How beautifully emblematic too are clouds, of

all the trials and afflictions which come to Christians. As these darken the sky of their joy and over-shadow the earth of their experience, they sometimes fear as they enter into the cloud. But when their sorrows are divinely sanctified, they descend upon the inner nature with purifying and reviving, stimulating and strengthening influence, and cause the spiritual life to develop into manifold forms of beauty and usefulness. It is the *dark* day and not the bright, which brings the *rain.*

As sunshine and showers are both needed for the quickening and growing of plants and flowers, so likewise showers of grace are just as necessary for the development of Christian virtues, as the knowledge of the gospel. Let us therefore desire and pray for showers, and ever remember that these generally in this present evil world are carried along the face of the firmament in clouds of darkness.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

CHAPTER XIII

THE RAIN THE WIND AND THE DEW AS SYMBOLS

THESE beautiful and beneficent phenomena of Nature *are symbols of the Holy Ghost.* They are all used as such in Scripture. Some of our readers may have wondered how it was that, after speaking of the Sky as the symbol of God the Infinite Spirit, and of the Sun as the symbol of Christ, the light and life of men, we did not then proceed to speak of the symbols of the Holy Ghost. The reason can easily be given. The doings of God the Father, and the work of Christ the Son, are both unconditioned by men. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world without man's consent, and the Son wrought out and finished the glorious work of human redemption without any direct or intelligent co-operation on man's part. The sky as the symbol of God and the sun as the symbol

of Christ, are purely heavenly phenomena, and are not affected by the earth and its ever-changing conditions. But the work of the Holy Ghost is *conditioned* by the wills and actions of men The Scriptures plainly tell us that that work can be neglected or accepted, resisted or welcomed, quenched or cherished. His symbols are products of the earth and its atmosphere, and could not properly be referred to until man, and the earth as his symbol, came to be dealt with. It is now in order to consider them.

I. *The rain.* Under the influence of the sun, vapour is drawn up into the firmament from the watery places of the earth, gathered into clouds, carried across the face of the sky by air-currents, condensed by cold, and then comes down as rain. The vapour which ascends is only water, but the drops which descend are *a great deal more than water.* The clouds attract floating substances and volatile matters as they pass through the atmosphere, and have all the virtues of the heavens poured into their bosoms by the pure ether and the warm sunshine, and the special influences generated by both, before they pour down their fresh and refreshing contents

to vitalize and develop all growing things. Everybody knows that mere water supplied to a garden by the human hand has very little influence on the grass, flowers, and plants, compared with the God-given rain. In like manner, under the convicting, convincing, and uplifting power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, penitent prayers and spiritual desires ascend into the moral firmament, not merely to exercise a *reflex* influence upon the mind and heart, but there to receive blessing from the bosom of the Godhead through the power of the Holy Ghost sent forth from the Father and the Son; and then they return laden with mercy, by which the mind and heart are spiritually enlightened and refreshed, and the spirit quickened into newness of life. The instinct to pray is universal. That instinct is stirred, inspired and guided by the gospel, and the believing cry of the God-seeking soul does not ascend into mere vacuity and emptiness. It is met by all the potencies of the spiritual heavens, and through the believer's faith as a medium, they descend into his inmost being, to vitalize, strengthen, and renew.

Showers of rain fall upon the earth in every

season of the year, and all of them are 'showers of blessing' even when they appear to be more or less locally injurious. In Nature, as in grace, 'all things work together for good' in the Divine purpose. But all kinds of showers in every season are neither equally seasonable nor beneficial; therefore God says, 'I will cause the shower to come down *in its season*.' So far as we can discern, the showers which fall in *winter* are of comparatively little value. When the skies are dark, and the earth looks dreary and desolate, and the winds wail and moan, and the waters sigh and sob, and the cold rains pelt and plash, we do not regard the latter as being to any great extent showers of blessing. They look sad in themselves, are depressing in their influence, and produce no visible beneficent results. The showers of *spring* are different. They are manifestly showers of blessing, for they soften and enrich the soil and waken into new life and activity all the roots and seeds which lie asleep in its bosom. But the showers of *summer* are pre-eminently showers of blessing. They renew the face of the earth, and cause its growing products to be rapidly developed. Seasonable

showers in *autumn* are also showers of blessing, because they swell the ears of corn and increase the harvest. But while the quickening showers of spring, and the maturing and perfecting showers of autumn are necessary and good, they are not so *manifestly* useful as the showers of summer. These sometimes fall very gently and greatly refresh the earth and all growing things, while at other times they descend with force and suddenness and effect astonishing results.

The use and beauty of rain are not so generally observed as they ought to be, even by students of Nature. It requires a season of drought to make them duly appreciative of this great natural blessing. Very few of our English poets have written about it with admiring rapture, as of many other natural phenomena. Tennyson has called it "a useful trouble," and even Wordsworth has written comparatively little about the falling shower, and that little is not specially suggestive of either admiration or wonder, gratitude or gladness. The fact that rain is usually abundant in our climate, and is generally associated with gloom and personal

discomfort, may in some measure account for the fact that its beauty is so little and seldom recognised. But in other countries, such as Palestine, where it is not so plentiful, and is therefore more highly esteemed, it is praised as well as appreciated, as the ardent and glowing language of the old Hebrew bards concerning it abundantly testifies. 'Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof; Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.'

The worth of rain is always determined by its association with sunshine. It is sunshine which conditions both its nature and influence in every period of the year. The showers of winter are comparatively worthless because the sunshine of the short days and cold months is very limited and feeble. The showers of spring are much more useful because then our hemisphere of the earth is once more turning to the great solar fire, and receiving the vitalizing warmth of its beams into its cold bosom. But the showers of summer are the most valuable of all because the sunshine of the long days is the most abundant and bestows the largest amount of fervent heat.

In like manner, *Divine sunshine and showers must always be associated in the moral and spiritual spheres of Christian life and activity.* The former without the latter, like long-continued sunlight, must ultimately wither and destroy the soul, and the latter without the former, like long-continued rain, would corrupt and mildew all its affections and powers. A knowledge of Christ as revealed in the gospel, without the reception of the Holy Ghost, can only prove 'a savour of death unto death,' and a mental receiving of the Spirit through the hearing of the gospel without an habitual walking in the sunshine of the Divine love, must necessarily prove a serious injury to the soul. Just as the effect of showers in Nature is conditioned by the sunshine which precedes and follows them; so, likewise, are the results of the Spirit's working determined by the reception of the gospel of Christ and the Christ of the gospel, and an habitual obedience to His wise and loving commands.

The *impenitent* hearer of the gospel is still in a *wintry* condition. His heart is cold in relation to God, and his spirit unquickened and dormant. He has no spiritual life—the life of love. If he

be a hearer of the gospel, he permits its truth to enter into his intellect, but not into his heart and will; and therefore it comes to him only like sunshine in winter to the frozen earth. Showers of Divine influence also fall upon his mind, for the Spirit of Truth is in the truth, and therefore it is not possible to hear and understand it and not be brought under the power of the Holy Ghost. But all such showers, like the rains of winter, fail to impart quickening and nourishment. These are unblissful showers, although in the Divine design they are all showers of blessing.

The *penitent* believer, having accepted the gospel, and received the Saviour it reveals, is no longer in a wintry state. He has passed from death unto life. It is *springtime* in his spirit. He now turns the face of his heart to the Spiritual Sun, and lives rejoicing in the light of eternal truth. And because he does so, the influences of the Holy Ghost—like the showers of April and May—deepen and develop the new life which has been given to him.

The thoroughly earnest and devoted Christian has *summer* in the soul. He walks and worships

in the smile of the Divine favour, while the light of the gospel shines brightly and warmly upon his inner being, intensifying his spiritual life and causing it to grow and become fruitful. This heavenly sunshine quickens an ardent thirst for God, and showers of reviving and restoring graces are given unto him. The Divine Renewer descends upon his mind and heart, his soul and spirit, 'like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth.' The more he receives of Christ the more he needs of the Spirit, and the more he obtains of the Spirit the more he requires of Christ, for showers must always be preceded and followed by sunshine if they are largely to refresh and invigorate, comfort and bless the soul.

II. *The Wind.* '*He walketh on the wings of the wind.*' These are charming words, highly poetical, and sublimely suggestive. They represent the wind as flying like a bird, and, as it passes over the face of the earth, the Divine Spirit moves upon its outstretched wings, presiding over their flight, and directing them in the path which God has appointed. His attitude of control is one of restful activity. He neither

sits nor runs upon their far-spreading pinions, but walks in calm serenity, and uses the swift and impetuous element of the breeze for the fulfilment of His beneficent purpose.

The natural wind is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. Did not Christ say to Nicodemus, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth; . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit'? And on the day of Pentecost 'there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind,' when the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of power was given to the disciples. Wind, Breath, and Spirit are synonymous terms. The breath of God is the medium of His Spirit. When He created man He *breathed* His own life into him. Jesus *breathed* on His disciples, and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' What is the *natural* wind but the Divine *breath*, through which the Divine Spirit acts upon all growing things? And what is the *spiritual* wind of spiritual speech but the Divine *breath* through which the Holy Ghost effects spiritual results in believers? In this higher region of life the Divine breath embodies itself *in language.* Why? Because in the spiritual sphere the Spirit of God operates,

not upon trees and flowers, which are passive to His power and quickly responsive to His influence, but upon human wills which are free, and on minds and hearts which can be persuaded and drawn only by reasoning and appeal. Spirit must always act on spirit through the medium of language, if thought and affection, conviction and desire, are to be awakened and directed. It is so, between man and man. When any one wishes to communicate his own spirit to the spirit of another, he breathes his thoughts in words. The words may be either spoken or written, but through them he conveys his very spirit, into the spirit of him who hears or reads. And thus also, God gives His Spirit unto men. The gospel, spoken and printed, is the instrument of the Spirit's power and influence. He still 'walketh on the wings of the wind.'

What are the special effects which the Holy Ghost, through the medium of the Divine breath or wind of the Word, is constantly accomplishing? 1. *The Divine Wind is a quickener of spiritual life.* 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' 'The words that I speak unto you,'

said Jesus, 'they are spirit and they are life.' 'He that receiveth My Words receiveth Me.' Through all the Christian ages myriads of souls have passed from death unto life through the belief and acceptance of Christ's gospel, and all over the world to-day, as the wind of heavenly truth blows into human hearts, under the power of the Holy Ghost, many will yield to its spiritualizing influence, and be quickened into spiritual life. 2. *The Divine Wind is a great purifier.* It cleanses the thoughts and imaginations of the mind, and all the motives and affections of the heart, for the Holy One desires to make us holy, and He does so through the instrumentality of gospel truth. 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.' 3. *The Divine Wind is refreshing.* Just as natural breezes on a hot summer day cool the atmosphere, and restore our physical energies, so, likewise, the wind of heavenly truth cools and comforts the soul. It brings 'times of refreshing.' 4. *The Divine Wind is invigorating.* Look at a field of growing corn under the influence of the breeze. As the invisible power passes over it every stalk is moved by its breath, and

by that very motion the corn is more deeply and firmly rooted in the soil, and strengthened to bring forth more fruit. In like manner, when the lovers of Christ are mentally and spiritually stirred by His words as waves of Divine influence pass over their inner being, they are consciously invigorated, and still more deeply rooted in God. 5. *The Divine Wind is ripening.* As the autumnal breezes loosen the roots of the corn, and mature the grain for the reaper, so does the gospel, applied by the Spirit, wean the advanced Christian from the world, and perfect his moral character, thereby preparing him for the coming of the Great Reaper, by whose scythe he shall fall like a shock of corn in its season.

III. *The Dew.* '*I will be as the dew.*' In Palestine, where the short rainy seasons are usually followed by long periods of dry weather and unclouded sunshine, the distilling of the dew was universally regarded as one of God's best natural gifts. The harvests of the field, the orchard, and the vineyard, were all, to a large extent, dependent upon the dew. Although in Britain we do not live in a hot climate, yet we are all familiar with the dew, and know something of

its action and influence. We have often seen it on bright summer or autumn mornings glittering like tears of gladness on the lovely faces of the flowers, and sparkling like pearls on the leaves of the trees, or on the grass in the meadow. Nothing remains untouched by its power.

> "In lang, lang days o' simmer,
> When the clear and cludless sky
> Refuses ae wee drap o' rain
> To Nature, parched and dry;
> The genial nicht wi' balmy breath
> Gars verdure spring anew,
> And ilka blade o' grass
> Keps its ain drap o' dew."

The falling of the dew, is also a beautiful emblem of the coming of the Holy Ghost. 1. *It falls invisibly.* Go into garden or field in the gloaming, when the summer sun has set, and the stars are becoming visible in the firmament, and the nightingales are pouring out their liquid love-notes on the still air, and if the dew is then descending you may feel it as it falls, but cannot discern it falling. It is far too subtle in its nature, to be observed by the bodily eyes. Being simply a deposition of vapour, it does not descend in drops like rain, but distils impercept-

ibly. *The Holy Spirit is also invisible, and all His operations are unseen.* His enlightening and regenerating influences can be felt, and their results are manifest, but His manner of working is as indiscernible as the falling of the dew. 2. *The dew falls silently.* It cannot be heard any more than seen. Even though the atmosphere of the night may be so still and calm that the beatings of one's own heart may become audible, yet the dew brings no sound to the ear, however copiously it falls. *The work of the Holy Ghost is also done silently.* He applies the gospel to heart and conscience with convicting and sanctifying power, but in doing so He utters no word that is audible to either the external or internal ear. Divine truth is indeed a Divine voice speaking to men, whether read or heard, but the Spirit of the truth, who makes it vital and effective, does not Himself, outside the truth, recommend and enforce it as preachers do. And when He witnesseth within us that we are sons and daughters of God the witness is not given in a voice that can be heard. It is a mediate and concurrent testimony communicated through the medium of our own experience. He wit-

nesses *with* our spirit, and not *to* it. 3. *The dew falls gently.* There is nothing more gentle. It is gentler than the dawning of the light in the summer morning, and gentler than the breath of the zephyr in the evening hour, which scarcely stirs a leaf upon the trees. In like manner *the descent of the Divine Spirit into the inner being is tender and quiet, and all His operations in the trustful and loving heart infinitely gentle.* He constrains, but does not compel; draws, but never drags; and uplifts the soul only by the gracious influences of wisdom and love. Hence, every genuine Christian who is truly living the spiritual life, consciously overcoming the world and triumphing over evil, is able rejoicingly to exclaim, 'Thy *gentleness* hath made me great.'

And what are the *effects* of the Spirit's coming into the believing heart? They are beautifully analogous to those produced by the dew on natural objects. 1. *It is cooling.* After a summer day of fervent heat the distilling of the dew on the parched products of the soil is marvellously refreshing. *The coming of the Holy Ghost into the loving heart, is also refreshing.* The

mind is quieted, the soul cooled, and the heart comforted by His blissful ministry. Every progressive Christian knows this by experience. 2. *It is softening.* The dew moistens vegetation, and thereby causes all its juices to flow freely, and prepares it to receive again in all its fulness of power the vitalizing sunshine. *And the influence of the Divine Spirit in the believer, is also softening.* He makes the heart tender, the conscience sensitive, and the spirit susceptible, and thus prepares the whole of the inner being to bask in the sunshine of the Divine love, and be filled unto all the fulness of God. 3. *It is fructifying.* The dew causes herbs and flowers to grow, and makes the fruit trees fruitful. *And is not the Holy Spirit, the great Fructifier?* It is by His power, that all the Christian graces in the believer are made to spring forth into manifestation and loveliness.

But the coming and working of the Divine Spirit is *conditioned*, like the falling of the dew. As the dew is not distilled every night all the year round, nor equally in all places at the same time, so neither does the Holy Ghost come to all men, nor in the same measure to all Chris-

tians. There are two things upon which dew is dependent; *it falls in warm weather*, and *only when the atmosphere is calm.* It is never seen in the depths of winter, nor in stormy nights in any season of the year. Only after the warm shining of the sun, and when everything is restful and still, does it gently fall upon the products of the soil. These facts teach great lessons. *When the heart is either in a cold wintry condition, or agitated by faithless fears and worldly cravings, the Divine Spirit cannot come.* It is only when the soul has basked in the warm sunshine of Divine truth and love, and is calmly trusting in the Saviour, that the Holy Ghost comes like the dew. Let Christians keep themselves in the love of God and rejoicingly rest in Jesus, and the influences of the Spirit will descend into their hearts like dew into the bosoms of the flowers.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WINTER AS A SYMBOL

THE earth itself being the symbol of man, it is both natural and reasonable to suppose that the varied seasons of the year will be faithfully and beautifully representative of his different spiritual conditions. And this we shall find them to be. Take winter first. When our hemisphere of the earth *turns itself away from the sun*, it passes through an autumn of decay into the dreary season of Winter. And dreary enough it often is. The sky is seldom visible; the sun frequently veils his brightness; the days shorten and darken; the earth becomes cold and desolate; the winds wail and howl; the waters sob and moan; the clouds mourn and weep; the frost chills the life-blood of all living and growing things, and makes the surface of the soil as hard as a stone; the white, cold, dripping mists arise from the rain-saturated valleys in the coun-

try; and the yellow fog—with all its blinding, bewildering and stifling influences—fills the streets and squares of the great city. And even in bright weather, when the sky is cloudless and the sunshine clear and comparatively warm, the vitalizing solar beams strike only on the surface of the earth, and fail to quicken its dormant life into beauty, fragrance and fruitfulness. The chief phenomena of winter are graphically described in one of the grand old psalms: 'He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?'

Darkness and cold are always associated. They are cause and effect. In comparison with the daytime, night is always cold, and just because it is dark. This is true of all countries, and of every season of the year. In southern climes, where the days are long, and the sunshine hot, the coolness of night may sometimes be pleasant, but in all northern regions of the world, where the nights are long and the winters gloomy, the cold is intense. *This is just as true in the moral sphere of life, as in that of the natural.* Darkness and cold always go together. Think of the

tribes of Heathendom who have never heard of the only living and true God, and know nothing of Christ or His gospel. What a terrible night of mental and spiritual darkness, broods upon their minds and hearts! And under its fearful pall a winter of arctic coldness and desolation lies upon their inner nature. They may have their idols and their religion, but they neither love the former nor rejoice in the latter. Oppressed by fears, and haunted by terrors, it is emphatically true that 'they sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.' But, in Christendom also, where Bibles, churches, and schools abound, there are many who know next to nothing either of Christ or His gospel. Surrounded by a noontide splendour of Christian truth and knowledge, they still remain in almost heathen darkness, without God and without hope in the world, and as a natural consequence the moral cold and torpor which lie upon their affections and desires in relation to God and spiritual realities are nothing less than winter in the heart. There are others who know the gospel and may even be familiar with its facts and doctrines, who have not received the truth in faith

and love nor entered into an experimental realization of the Christian life. They may fairly be regarded as enlightened sinners, but they are sinners still. The light they possess is purely intellectual, and resembles the clear sunshine of a frosty day in winter. It plays only upon the surface of the soul, and does not quicken spiritual life within them. The moral darkness of such hearers of the gospel is great, because in unbelief they have intelligently and voluntarily closed their inner being against the entrance of the truth. It was of them that Jesus said, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' If only he had eyes to see it, the merely natural man might behold as in a mirror his own moral condition faithfully represented in the phenomena of winter.

Oh the misery, of a moral winter in the soul! The chill which it breathes is that of numbness and death. M. de Tocqueville was right when he said, "The great malady of the world is cold." A veritable winter lies upon the hearts of millions of human beings in relation to one another, for suspicions and fears, envies and

jealousies, dislikes and latent hatreds everywhere abound. And the wintry cold which rests upon the unsaved soul in relation to God, is profound and terrible; it cannot bear to think of Him, although His very nature is Love. Oh! that all alienated and impenitent men and women did but realize their real condition! They would shiver in heart and soul under the influence of the moral chill which rests upon them, and make haste to turn the faces of their hearts to the Saviour the Light of the world and the great giver of Life. Only in the brightness of His truth and in the warmth of His love, can any human being truly live and be really blessed. But many elect to remain in the winter of their cold and alienated condition and refuse to come out of it into the beautiful spring and glorious summer of reconciliation and gladness. They may feel the wintriness of their state and its manifold miseries, but instead of coming forth into the sunshine of God and eternity, they try to obtain all the warmth and comfort they need from such *artificial* fires as they themselves can kindle—the fires of sensuous pleasures and mere earthly comforts, which are

not only altogether insufficient, but must speedily go out. What saith the Lord? 'Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.' 'Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.'

And what of the backslider? At one time he too was in spiritual darkness and alienated in heart from God; but having penitently turned and believingly opened his spirit to the light of truth, that light quickened true life within him and brought him into vital union with Christ and into conscious communion with God. The frozen streams of his heart began to melt and flow forth in praise. His darkness was gradually dispelled and the coldness removed. Winter departed, and a blissful and beautiful springtime from heaven came down into his inmost being. That springtime of promise ought to have advanced into a summer of growth, and in due time into an autumn of abundant fruitfulness. But alas! he has gone backward and not forward in the

Christian life. Under the subtle seductions of the world, the flesh, and the wicked one, he yielded to evil and went back into a wintry condition. His faith failed, love became languid, clouds of doubt or indifference gathered in the firmament of his mind, the light that was in him became darkness, and a cold chill settled upon his soul. He may return to the artificial fires which the poor mad world has enkindled, and to the companionship of those who surround them, but no mere earthly pleasures or comforts can ever again warm the heart of any man who has felt in his bosom the genial glow and the delightful warmth of the Divine love. Neither can he ever find again in the society of worldly men and women, the real heart-joy and soul-satisfaction which he realized in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ through the indwelling power of the Spirit. However great his backslidings may become, he will find it impossible truly to comfort the heart at any of the world's fires, or enter into the friendship of affinity with those who are alienated from God and have no love for the Saviour. Therefore, in the heart of every backslider there is a

coldness, an emptiness, and a dreary desolation which is wintry indeed. It will be well if the very wintriness of his experience impels him truly to repent, and turn the face of his heart once more towards the great Sun of Righteousness. The natural sun, as we have seen, is the symbol of Christ. *The sun never alters its relationship to the earth*, but the earth changes its relationship to the sun, and its changes are the causes of all the different seasons of the year. In like manner, it is not the Christ of God who turns away from sinful men, but they from Him, and even when they become alienated from Him, He does not forsake them. He still continues to pity and love them, even in their sins, and does not cease to manifest His love. What is the gospel but the sunlight of His love, radiating upon them the light and warmth of His infinite compassion? It is a mighty moral magnet designed and fitted to draw the soul back again into right relationship with God. It is full of the forces of Divine attraction. Christ is 'the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Just as the sun exercises a mighty attractive influence

upon the earth, even in winter, so Christ—the great solar centre of the moral universe—is constantly seeking to turn the hearts of men unto Himself. 'Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee,' is the powerful and persuasive appeal of His love to every sinful heart. There is no hearer of the gospel who has not felt more or less the Divine drawing. But its power is moral, and therefore resistible. It draws, but does not compel; constrains, but will never force. And if it be resisted, what must be the natural and necessary result? The moral winter of the inner being shall not only be continued but deepened, and its darkness and coldness intensified. Were the earth endowed with a free will, and intelligently chose to remain in a wintry condition rather than turn to the sun and receive out of its fulness life, beauty, and joy, what would men say regarding it? Surely they would all agree that it was utterly insane! And are not all men *morally mad* who elect to remain in a moral winter, when by the simple acceptance of Christ and the reception of the Spirit they might rise up into a springtime of moral loveliness, a summer of spiritual develop-

ment, and an autumn of abundant Christian fruitfulness? Many make this most foolish and ungrateful choice, and yet in the greatness of His patient lovingkindness the Lord continues to draw—'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' is His constantly repeated exhortation and appeal. Oh, would to God, that all who hear it would penitently and believingly cry, 'Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' Let them open their inmost being to the inflowing of the Divine wisdom and love, and 'the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon them with healing under his wings.' He will give them a new life, clothe them with moral beauty, and fill them with Divine peace and joy. The tempests of turbulent passion within them shall all be hushed into the sweet calm of orderly affections and right desires. Winter shall depart, and spring come. And thus they shall be *saved*—saved from alienation, guilt and misery, and saved to the experience and enjoyment of reconciliation, hope and blessedness. A great salvation, truly! Who will hesitate to embrace it, and pass from Winter into Spring?

CHAPTER XV

THE SPRING AS A SYMBOL

WHEN our side of the earth turns itself again to the sun, as it begins to do from Christmas time, a great and wonderful change is speedily effected. The days lengthen and brighten, the dreary fogs are less frequent, and a stir of new life in the earth, the grass, and the trees soon becomes apparent. The frozen streams are thawed, and the liberated waters flow away to their far-off home in the sea, with mirth in their motions and music in their tones. 'God sendeth out his word and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.' The melting and flowing process may not appear to onlookers to be either beautiful or pleasant, and it may bring to them even greater discomforts than those which had been inflicted by the frost and snow. But the process will pass, and day by day, as the earth continues to turn more and more to

the great source of light and warmth, winter will depart and spring appear. In like manner, *when the alienated sinner turns to Christ as a Saviour, a great and glorious transformation is soon brought about.* By the word of His truth and the wind of His spirit, God enlightens the darkened mind, softens the hard heart, and begins a work of quickening in the spirit, which by-and-by will appear in word and action, clothing the conduct with beauty and fruitfulness, and filling the soul with gladness and song. It is by His gospel and Spirit that the Lord effects these blissful results, and therefore the more fully that the former is believed and the latter received, the sooner shall the winter of moral coldness and desolation pass away, and be followed by the sweet seasons of spiritual life and loveliness, fragrance and fruitfulness, melody and joy—seasons which shall beautify, satisfy, and glorify the soul for ever. *The first effects* produced by the Divine Word and Spirit, are not in themselves either delightful or attractive. They convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come, and lead the soul to penitence and self-loathing, which are not pleasant experi-

ences. 'I abhor myself, and repent.' But let not the repentant sinner be discouraged or turn back; the transition period will soon pass by, and be succeeded by flowers, and birdsongs and lovely sunshine. Let him go forward from penitence to faith, from contrition to reconcilement, and from sorrow to joy, and day by day, as he turns his heart more fully to the Saviour, the Divine life and love will take fuller possession of him, and fill his whole being unto all the fulness of God. It is true that cold days and colder nights, and showers of hail and snow may yet retard the unfolding of leaves and buds, and keep back the coming of spring in the fulness of its glory. As Shakspeare says:—

> "The tyrannous breath of the North,
> Checks all our buds from blowing."

But even in the coldest days of February and March, the time is near when the old grim monarch with snowy locks and beard of icicles shall surely die, and the fair young queen of many charms reign in his stead. Under the influence of the one the earth has long lain in darkness and fetters, like nations of men under the repressive powers of despotism, but the warm

smile and quickening breath of the other shall awaken all her dormant energies into life, and clothe her with resurrection-robes of floral loveliness. By what extraordinary means is such a glorious change effected? It is not wrought out in a moment and by miracle, but by a steady process the working of which can be known and the results predicted. It is by quickening and development, and not by a Divine act or fiat, that the naked earth is clothed with living garments of glory, and all her sorrowful tears and wild wailings changed into smiles of joy and songs of gladness. But though the return of spring may not be a miracle, it is still sufficiently miraculous and wonderful to every devout mind that thoughtfully considers its advent. Philosophers and men of science may tell us that it is simply the result of the operation of natural laws, and expect us to be satisfied with their belittling and complacent assertion. But laws in themselves are not independent powers, acting apart from the will of an intelligent Lawgiver, by whom they were ordained and in whose hands they are all gathered up into unity. We admire them but we wor-

ship Him, and rejoice to call Him 'Our Father who art in heaven.' While it is the province of Science to observe and investigate, it is the privilege of Religion to believe and adore. She spreads her wings just at the point where philosophy and science cease their march, and by the exercise of a faith which is at once instinctive, rational, and divinely inspired, it traces every law back to its beginning, and finds that beginning in the infinitely wise and unchanging will of God. And because it does so, it rightly regards all the facts and phenomena of Nature, not merely as the results of the operation of natural laws, but also as the direct though mediate workings of the Almighty. The language of Scripture is none the less scientific because it is devout, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.'

Look around upon Nature in the early spring season, and you may see the firstlings of her children. The snowdrop and the crocus are the first to fulfil their brief but blissful ministry; the daisies soon follow to brighten and beautify the meadows; the delicate and modest violets breathe

out their delicious fragrance from the roots of the budding hedges; the daffodils and wild hyacinths (blue-bells) adorn the gardens and woods, and the ever-welcome primröses are daily being sought and gathered by the children in the shady dells. These are some of the earliest products of the new vernal season, and we never fail to give them a glad and grateful welcome, not only for their own sweet charms, but also as prophecies and pledges of the rich abundance of floral beauty yet to come. In one of his charming Sonnets on Spring, Dr. Alexander H. Japp has beautifully said,—

"Old Earth, awakened from her Winter sleep,
All softly puts her dainty garments on;
And binds around her, gracefully, a zone
Of tender green, with blue embroidered deep.

Over that budding sun-tipped hedgerow peep
Such vivid emeralds as ne'er glanced in stone,
Or in the crowns of mighty Cæsars shone;
And violets stir in yonder wayside heap.

The firstling beauty of the wood is full
Of colours, varied softly in their hue;
The rabbits frisk, and birds in chorus sing;
The starling screams, and doves are light on wing.

The air is pure—most sweetly clear and cool,
And heaven seems opened thro' the distant blue."

Now, if God is able and willing thus to send a springtime to Nature, is He not equally able and willing to give a springtime of quickening and renewal to human souls? Is not Man greater than Nature? Does she not exist for his sake? And is not the moral and spiritual well-being of His children far more precious in the eyes of the Divine Father than the adornings of the house in which they live? *Nature also symbolizes the process of the Divine working in the human mind and heart.* As the earth turns to the sun, he pours into her receptive bosom his light, heat and power, and in like manner, just according to the measure in which the thoughts, affections, and desires of Christians concentrate themselves upon Christ, He pours into them the light of His truth and the warmth of His love, and bestows upon them the influences of His power, by which they are enlightened, vitalized, and renewed, and made progressively beautiful with His own perfect moral loveliness. And then with gratitude and gladness the saved soul can say and sing regarding itself, 'Lo! the winter is past, the rainy season is over and gone; the flowers appear upon the earth, and the time of

the singing of birds is come.' This exquisite sacred poetry thrills the soul with a pure and purifying pleasure. It is a brief but beautiful word-picture of the delightful season of spring, vividly contrasted with the dark and dreary months of winter—a picture which fills the mind and heart with brightness and rejoicing.

The Winter! What a dark, cold, desolate, and dreary season that was, when the forests were leafless and bare, the fields bleak and barren, and the woods silent and songless! The snow lay upon the mountains, the chilling north wind sighed or shrieked as it swept in fitful gusts through the lonely lanes in the country, or along the city streets among the crowded habitations of men. The dense fog with its weird darkness was a dreary depression, the rains wept like a broken-hearted mother, and the brief, dull days, and the long, dark nights were full of gloom and sadness. But, 'lo! the winter is past.' A marvellous transformation has been effected. As the earth turned more and more to the sun, and as his vitalizing light and heat penetrated and permeated her bosom, all her hidden life-forces were renewed, and all her dormant energies set

in motion. Everywhere she hastened—like a bride adorning for her husband—to array her comely form with living and breathing robes of fragrant loveliness, and put on precious jewels of right celestial worth. Then her admirers might have sung with jubilant gladness in the following inspiring words:—

"The new creation comes again,
To hill and vale, to brake and fen;
The budding leaves and flowers come forth,
To make a Paradise of earth.
A softer glory fills the sky,
A balmier breeze is gliding by;
The choral birds in rapture sing,
It is the spring! It is the spring!"

This great change in Nature, is beautifully emblematic of the glorious results effected in every Christ-believing soul. Formerly, he existed in a wintry condition. His inner and inmost nature was cold, dark, stormy, and desolate. Was it not cold, when his heart was alienated from God and filled with fear and enmity instead of faith and love? Was it not dark—awfully dark—when he was ignorant of God's character and his own, and neither understood nor believed the gospel? Was it not stormy when gusts of anger and

tempests of passion arose in his troubled hours, and raged in his agitated bosom? And was it not terribly desolate when the fruit-trees of his character and conduct brought forth no blossoms of heavenly hope nor fruits of holy living, and was altogether without any spiritual beauty or use? Verily, it was winter indeed! But now he is 'a new creature in Christ; old things have passed away, and behold all things are become new.' He possesses a new life, and out of that spiritual life, as from a fountain, streams of new thoughts, new affections, new desires, new hopes, new joys, and new aspirations flow. 'Lo! the winter is past.'

'*The rain is over and gone.*' These words do not refer to a rainy day, but to the rainy season, which in Palestine is a transition period between winter and spring. It is then that clouds darken the sky and showers fall, and brief though beautiful glimpses of sunshine visit the earth. *This rainy season in Nature is strikingly symbolic of the time when deep religious convictions agitate the human mind, and true penitence melts the heart*—the time when fears and hopes chase each other along the moral firmament, and tears, it

may be, of profound sorrow flow from the eyes—the time when the soul sees both itself and its Saviour in the mirror of the gospel, and is impelled to loathe its own vileness, while it admires and adores the beauty and goodness of the Lord. But by-and-by, when faith obtains a still clearer vision of His ineffable glory, and receives more of His perfect peace and joy, then it triumphantly exclaims, 'The rain is over and gone.' 'We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

'*The flowers appear on the earth.*' By the mighty power of the spring sunshine and showers, the dormant roots and sleeping seeds have been quickened into life, and now the beautiful and fragrant children of the sun and soil grow up in great profusion and variety in garden and field. We have gladly welcomed the coming of these heaven-sent angels of mercy, and rejoice in their blissful ministry—a ministry which is being more and more fully appreciated by all sorts and conditions of men. As Ruskin truly says in *Modern Painters*, "There may indeed have been a Fall of Flowers, as a Fall of Man; but assuredly creatures such as we are can now fancy nothing lovelier than roses and lilies, which would grow

for us side by side, leaf overlapping leaf, till the earth was white and red with them, if we cared to have it so." We bless God for the flowers. They are divinely intended to minister not only to the senses, but also, and chiefly, to the soul and spirit. They are meant to teach heavenly things, and uplift the thoughts and desires of men to the pure and perfect life. As Mrs. Browning has beautifully said :—

> "There's not a flower of spring,
> That dies ere June, but vaunts itself allied
> By issue and symbol, by significance
> And correspondence, to that spirit-world
> Outside the limits of our time and space,
> Whereto we are bound."

They speak of the holiness and beauty of God, and are, therefore, revelations of Himself. Every flower is a thought and work of the Great Creator, and if so, what a beautiful Being He must be who thinks and makes such beautiful things ! They also remind us, that *a life of moral purity and beauty is possible to ourselves.* If only we would open our minds and hearts to receive the sunshine of the Divine truth and love, and the rain and dew of heavenly grace, as the flowers open their bosoms to the influences

of the natural heavens, we should be purified from all our moral defilement, clothed with the beauty of holiness, and send forth upon the world's atmosphere from day to day the purifying and reviving fragrance of the heavenly life. And this surely ought to be the ardent desire of every true lover of Christ. To such an one the gospel is no longer only the wintry light of doctrine, but the warm and vivifying light of love. It is not now received into the intellect only, but also into the heart with affection and ardour. The soul turns to gaze with an ever fuller vision into the radiant face of the glorified Saviour, who is now the supreme attraction, and has become all its salvation and all its desire. And as it basks in the heavenly radiance of the Divine wisdom and love, *the virtues and graces of the Christian life are quickened and developed in its bosom, and these are the flowers of the spiritual landscape, of which all the natural flowers are symbols.* For a time, at the beginning of the Christian career, they may remain hidden in the bosom, but they will soon come forth into manifold manifestations, and become visible in speech and action. Courage and hope, humility

and gentleness, patience and purity, and all other Christian virtues rooted in the moral character, become visible in all the outgoings of daily life. 'The flowers *appear*.'

'*The time of the singing of birds is come*.' In winter you may hear the harsh cry of the raven, the shrill scream of the eagle or the hawk, and the lonesome hooting of the owl, but not until spring comes do the birds warble out their songs in garden and grove, and fill the woods with melody. Those persons lose a great deal of pure and uplifting pleasure who fail to cultivate acquaintance with the birds, and who take but little notice of their charming and instructive ways. To watch the dear little creatures building their nests, feeding their young, and sporting one with another in the golden sunlight among the leafy branches of their native woodlands, is a natural enjoyment of a very sweet and satisfying kind. There is no wonder that Jesus said, 'Behold the birds!' They are creatures of God, and the wonderful and charming gifts of varied song which they possess are all of His bestowment. This happy country of ours is rich in song-birds. In other lands they may be more

numerous, and their plumage more resplendent, but few of them sing, and their songs are comparatively poor and uninteresting. There they turn the sunlight into beauty, while here they change it into song. The chief of our British song-birds are the lark and the linnet, the thrush and the blackbird, the reed-warbler and the chaffinch, the bullfinch and the goldfinch, the robin and the wren. There are many other quiet songsters, but these are the best known and the most popular. Through all the spring and summer months they pour out their rich and varied strains, and send many a thrill of hope and happiness into human hearts and homes. That soul must indeed be hard and unimpressible, which never feels itself stirred and cheered by the songs of the birds as Wordsworth was.

"I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind:
The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure;
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure."

What an exquisite loveliness there is in Nature,

on a calm, bright morning in May! How delightfully refreshing the fragrant breath of the flowers! How thrillingly enjoyable the jubilant notes of the birds! They fill the woods and orchards with ringing echoes of melody as they chant together their early hymn of praise. Loudest of all are those of the thrush and the blackbird; and although their notes are very different, yet they sweetly harmonize. The song of the former is open and free, fearless and exultant, while that of the latter is quiet though strong, and strangely mellow and pathetic while full of ecstasy. Look at one yonder, on the very topmost twig of a blossoming May-tree! How his eyes sparkle and his throat dilates as he sings his charming song, — a song which seems to be setting the poetry of the blossoms to music, and which thrills with pleasure the heart of every attentive listener. The blackbird, it is true, is fond of strawberries, cherries, and other fruits, but who ought to begrudge him even this dainty and delicious fare when he turns it all into melody, and meanwhile destroys multitudes of insects and slugs which would largely destroy the fruits of the garden? We

have noticed that the evening songs of most of our singing birds differ in tone from those they sang at the dawning of the day. Their morning songs were full of gladness, hope, and ecstacy; while those of the evening hour are rich, deep, and full as with a mellow experience. They largely give to the gloaming hour, its peculiar charms and pleasures. But at length the sun departs, light vanishes from the clouds, darkness settles upon the face of the landscape, everything is hushed and still. In the suggestive words of Longfellow,—

"Nature seems kneeling at her evening prayer."

The birds have ceased their singing, and are now reposing trustfully in their chosen resting-places under the wings of God—the outstretched wings of the infinite wisdom and the eternal love. God careth for the birds, as Jesus has assured us, for even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without His notice. 'His tender mercies, are over all his works.' One by one the stars now come into view, and o'ercanopy the earth with glory, and away in the silent wood *the nightingale* chants his lay. With a voice like that of a seraph he sings his sweetest song at

the midnight hour. And what a song it is! How it thrills the listening ear, and uplifts the reflective spirit! There are thousands of people in England who have never heard the nightingales, though in many parts of the country, especially in the south, they sing for several weeks every year. All such persons would spend both time and money wisely and well if once, at least, they would visit the districts where the birds abound, and spend a night with the nightingales. They would thereby experience a joy they could never forget. As some one—whose name we do not know—has beautifully said—

"Where fragrant roses scent the air,
And daisies in the meadows grow,
I bid the nightingale declare
The bliss that stirs his bosom so.

The moon is in a tender haze;
The air-white stars are in a dream;
The silver fount in music plays,
The dimples darken on the stream.

'Tis night! 'tis night! the soul awakes;
The poppy dews of slumber fail;
The soul its fleshly shell forsakes
And listens to the nightingale."

The chief *lesson* which he seems to teach, is that

of *a rejoicing trustfulness.* He is not afraid of darkness, silence and solitude. Oh, that every one who listens to his lay, might learn to say and sing in the exercise of a calm and steady trust in God, 'The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and *in the night his song shall be with me*, and my prayer unto the God of my life!'

When morning dawns once more, and the face of the earth is glorified with sunshine, if we walk afar into the lonely places of the country, we shall find that they too, have their feathered minstrels and their charming songs. *The grey linnet*, for instance, sits on the gorse in the moor and sings to its happy mate, in the nest among the thorns, its quiet but exquisite song. *The lessons he teaches, are those of retirement, meditation and sweet content* — great and important lessons in these exciting and exhausting times of rush and hurry, anxiety and fret. He abides for the most part in solitude, and seldom goes near to the cities or towns. And surely! it is not good for human beings to be always in the crowd with its manifold distractions, and constantly talking with those around. Many are

strangers to themselves, because they seek so much the companionship of others. They ought at times and perhaps often to covet retirement and quiet, that under their soothing influences they may read and reflect, meditate and pray. A thoughtful, devout and receptive silence, is essential not only to Christian growth but also to Christian usefulness. It is out of such silence, that all really vital and helpful speech must flow. Thought is a soul of which words are the body, and according to the value of the thought, so is the worth of the language which gives it embodiment and expression. Who can describe what the social influence of Christians would become, if only all their speech were Christianized? Governed by Christian principle, and issuing always from the heart, it could not fail to be simple and sincere, instructive and useful. Floods of useless and injurious speech are constantly flowing along the channels of social life, and much of it we fear is contributed by professing Christians. Foolish jesting, frivolous talk and idle gossip abound, and these are not the product of thought but of thoughtlessness, and are never begotten in the silent hour. Heavenly

beings can minister to the human soul only in the still season. What does history testify concerning this matter? Have not all Divine revelations been given to earnest men in their seasons of quiet, when in solitude and silence they were prepared to listen and receive? It was in the lonely wilderness of Midian that the Lord God first appeared to Moses, and revealed Himself to him and also the Divine purpose concerning Israel. It was on the summit of Sinai, as all alone he stood in the presence of the visible God that he received the Divine commandments of the Moral Law. It was in the desert of Arabia that Paul — after his conversion — was taught by the Risen and Glorified Saviour to understand the gospel, and also prepared to become its apostle to the Gentile world. It was in the island of Patmos, that the saintly John received in vision the Revelation of things to come. It was in the silence and solitude of blindness, that "the grand old psalmist of the Commonwealth" conceived and indited his *Paradise Lost.* It was in the solitary silence of Bedford jail that John Bunyan "the immortal dreamer" depicted the journey of Christian to

the Celestial City. And what was true of them, is true of all men. Lofty thoughts and great deeds, are invariably the outcome of meditative silence. Look at Christ Himself. Although He did not begin His public ministry until He was thirty years old, and although it lasted only for three years, yet during that brief period, He often left behind Him the busy haunts of men and even the companionship of His disciples, and went away into the lonely places of the land to commune with His own heart and enjoy fellowship with His Father. From thence He returned refreshed and invigorated to teach and heal the people, and carry forward to its sublime fulfilment the Divine mission of His earthly life. Has He not in this, as in other things, left us an example to be imitated? If Christians really desire to be Christlike in character and conduct, progressive in themselves and useful to others, let them frequently retire into solitude and silence, to ponder the Word of God, contemplate the Divine character, imbibe the Divine Spirit, and be built up into Christ. It is not more meetings they need with more talk and excitement, but more of quiet meditation and secret

prayer. 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door pray to thy Father who seeth in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' Thou shalt come forth from thence into the social life of men with clearness of vision, warmth of heart, and inspired by noble purposes, to live for Christ, speak for Christ, labour for Christ, and do good unto all men as opportunity offers. Jesus also said unto His disciples, 'Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.' '*A desert place!*' Yes; it is there, if anywhere, that a tired worker will find the rest and recreation by which he may be physically invigorated and mentally refreshed. It is a real joy to go into a desert place, on a lovely summer day. The solitudes of the wilderness are full of interesting objects and musical voices, which breathe into the inmost soul of the observant and reflective person a purifying and uplifting calm. The air is fragrant with the exhaled incense of flowers and grasses, trees and shrubs; the little streams sing in a sweet and dreamy undertone on their way to the sea; the plaintive bleatings of the lambs and sheep deepen the profound stillness; the shrill

cries of many wild birds in the moors beyond fall upon the ear, while high over head the white fleecy clouds, filled with golden glory, slowly float across the beautiful bosom of the clear blue sky. The strains of the thrush and the blackbird come in dying echoes from the wood in the distance, while nearer, though not near—

"The cushat croodles amorously,"

and high in the firmament the song of *the lark* is "melodious and loud." The chief of all our song-birds is the "lyrical poet of the sky," as Christopher North called it. He too prefers, though not so exclusively as the linnet, the moorlands and solitary places. Many a time, when a boy, the writer was wont to go away into the lonely wilds near his native place in bonnie Scotland, just to listen to the enraptured notes of this wonderful singer. To lie down on a warm day in summer or autumn among the flowers on the hillside, or in the moor among the heather, and listen to the hum of the bees as they passed on their honey-gathering mission, and to the voice of the lark as it floated and circled and soared among the cloudlets, like an

embodied rapture, and rained down a shower of soul-thrilling and mind-inspiring music, was a joy which can never be forgotten. And the joy is not all in the past, for the mere recollection thereof at any time and almost in any circumstances stirs the soul with pleasure. Well would it be with all young people if they could be made to 'behold the birds,' and learn to appreciate their singing. The lark sometimes begins its song on the ground, and it is most interesting to observe the throbbings of its breast and the quivering of its wings, as it walks in the furrows of the field or stands upon some little knoll pouring out its gladness. And by and bye, just as if the utterance of its joy increased its joy—which in all likelihood it does—it rises from the earth and begins to soar towards the sky. Look at it as it ascends, and think of all the appropriate descriptive titles which our poets have given to it. They have called it "a winged soul"—"a blithe spirit"—"an ethereal minstrel"—"a pilgrim of the sky"—"a herald of the morn"—"a bard of the blushing dawn"—"a fluttering ecstasy." See it as it wings its upward flight, circling round and round, and rising higher

and higher, and all the while pouring out the rapturous and enraptured strains of its delight! Its sweetest songs are sung when its mate sits in their nest among the growing corn, or under the shade of some overhanging grass or heather, for all its notes are then inspired by the joy of a pure and fervent affection. Love is always the source of the loftiest song. And while the lark thus sings to its loved one brooding among the flowers, it also sings, though it knows it not, to the angels and to God, and to all the children of the Eternal Father who may choose to listen. And if only the human hearers trace its song-embodied joy to the fountain of all true blessedness in the love-filled bosom of God, then may they gratefully and rejoicingly exclaim, That is our Father's love coming to us in music, and a little of His joy warbled out upon the atmosphere, through the soul of the bird, for our enjoyment. And when thus regarded, the ecstasy of its song thrills the devout listener with a quiet rapture, and impels him to praise. Almost all our poets have sung most sweetly of the lark. Shelley's magnificent Ode is a glorious outburst of poetic inspiration, and Wordsworth's verses

are charmingly beautiful and suggestive; but of all the utterances of our poets concerning the lark, we prefer the simple, lilting strains of the Ettrick Shepherd, which fall upon the mind and heart with the same thrilling, gladdening and uplifting influence which we feel when listening to the sweet strains of the singer itself.

"Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er mountain and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
O to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud:
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamers that herald the day;
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, hie, hie thee away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms,
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!

Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
O to abide in the desert with thee!"

The chief lessons taught by the lark, are those of humility and heavenly-mindedness. Its nest is on earth, but it ascends into the firmament, and like a "musical cherub" pours out its soul in song at the golden gates of glory. It reminds us of Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart,' as all truly great men are,—and who lived the heavenly life from day to day, doing only those things which pleased the Father. Let all His followers be likewise 'clothed with humility,' and 'set their affection on things above,' for to be spiritually-minded is life and peace and joy. Every genuine Christian who has died with Christ, and risen with Him into the Resurrection Life, should henceforth live a life of ascension. Let him soar and sing, like the lark.

We cannot leave our favourite songsters without saying a few words about the *robin.* The robin is a homely bird, and comes nearer our persons and dwellings, especially in winter, than any other. When the golden age of universal amity and kindness comes, we doubt not that

then he will freely enter into our houses, nestle in the bosoms of those who love him, and warble out his joy as from their very hearts, in notes of ecstasy. Watch him now while he sings, and you will observe that all the time he is carefully looking around, to see that no enemies are at hand. This constant fear must necessarily have a very repressive influence upon his song; but in the coming days of peace and gentleness when 'nothing shall hurt or destroy' all fear shall be removed, and then his song, and the songs of all the birds, shall throb and thrill with a freedom and a gladness far, far greater than at present. The brave and beautiful redbreast is a favourite with all who care to 'behold the birds,' as Jesus enjoined. The lines of Wordsworth express the universal feeling—

> "Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
> The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
> Our little English robin;
> The bird that comes about our doors
> When Autumn winds are sobbing!
> The bird who by some name or other
> All men who know thee call thee brother?"

Dwellers in towns and cities are not so well acquainted with robin as those who live in the

rural places of the land. They find out his nest in summer, and listen to his warblings in the wood, or in the gardens at their own cottage doors. He sings almost all the year round, except in times of severe frost, but his special seasons of song are the late autumn and the early spring. The songs he sings and the seasons in which he sings them, are full of instruction and comfort to all who thoughtfully consider them, and are willing to learn. *Courage* and *hope* are the lessons he teaches—courage to look winter in the face, without either foreboding or fear, and hope with which to anticipate the bright days of the sunny months which are coming. In the time of adversity let every Christian say, 'I will trust and not be afraid,' and when prosperity comes let him 'rejoice evermore,' and most of all 'in hope of the glory of God.'

Song-Birds were doubtless made by the great Creator *to praise Himself.* All His works praise Him, and as the Scripture tells us, 'he rejoiceth in the works of his hands.' But the song-birds were sent, not only to praise God, but *also to please His children*; all things are for their sakes. When the songs of the woodland singers

are reflectively listened to and rightly appreciated, they cannot fail to awaken emotions of gladness and gratitude which will embody themselves in praise. And still further God has sent His birds, not only to please His children, but also *to do them good.* Their songs are designed and fitted to effect a most blissful moral result. God is the great Harmony, and all His children ought likewise to be harmonies—harmonies in themselves, in harmony with one another, and in harmony with Him. But sin has broken and disorganized their nature, and filled them with discords. They are like musical instruments out of tune. The Divine Spirit has come as the Divine Harmonist, to retune the broken harp of the sinful soul, cast out its discords, and bring all its faculties and affections into perfect harmony; and the little birds help Him in this great and needful ministry. While listening to their songs look into your own bosom and observe the effects of their singing. How they still its disquietudes, hush its discords, and cause all its mental faculties and moral emotions to dance themselves into a rhythm of orderliness! Dear little missionaries are they all, singing the

gospel of the universal love, and daily uniting with the Holy Ghost, though unconsciously, in working out the regeneration of humanity! *The songs of the birds, are also utterances of their own individual joy.* They sing because they must. Their little hearts are so full of a palpitating gladness that they are impelled to give it utterance. And that gladness finds its fullest expression *in the time of love*, and when love has been crowned and satisfied by *marriage*, for love is the essence of all real joy, and marriage the divinely intended consummation of all true love. They sing their best and most enraptured songs in the spring and early summer, when they have wooed and won their happy mates, and unite with them in building their little nests, which to them are home and heaven.* Dr. Mason Good has truly said, "Loves and Marriages are common to all nature."

Of what are birds the symbols? They sym-

* It is a shame that multitudes of different kinds of birds, and those the most beautiful, should be mercilessly slaughtered every year, that their feathers and wings may be used for the decoration of vanity. The external refinements of civilization often cover great thoughtlessness and barbarity of nature

bolize the affections of the Christ-believing heart. It had no songs of love and joy to sing in praise unto God till after its great saving change, when it passed from death unto life and from winter into spring. But the really trustful heart is full of gratitude and gladness. It warbles forth its love-songs and joy-notes unto God, and exclaims, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.' The worldling sings that he may be happy, but the true Christian sings because he is happy. His happiness is a profound and ever-deepening blessedness. Love is in the heart of it, and love is the fountain of all genuine joy and peace, and the soul of all true praise. The loving heart must worship, just as the bird must sing. Christians delight to praise, ay! and they can bless God at all times and in all circumstances, having this sweet assurance that their worship is well pleasing unto Him, and that all His providential dealings with them shall be made the ministers of grace to their higher nature. The time of the singing of souls is come. Their affections warble in the bosom, in the joyous springtime of their new life. The joy which inspires their praise is both Divine

and human ; it is at once a measure of God's joy within them and also their own joy. It is the joy of love—love to God and love to men, and it, too, will find its final Home and Heaven in the attainment of the union of a perfect affinity with another, without which no true love can ever be satisfied. Every redeemed soul will enter into the fulness of *spiritual* union with Christ and God in Him ; into *social* union with the blood-washed Brotherhood, and into *counterpartal* union with its Divinely-appointed mate, for in the beginning God made *Man*, male and female, and united them in marriage, and but for the blighting and disuniting power of sin, their marriage would have been *eternal.* And in the great future, when sin has been abolished by the redemptive work of Christ, then God's first purpose—which was perfect—will be gloriously restored and everlastingly perpetuated. Every little nest in the woodlands is a symbol of the universe, which is the one Infinite Home of the Divine family, and also a symbol of every separate dwelling or mansion-home in the house of the Eternal Father. 'In my Father's house are many mansions.'

CHAPTER XVI

THE SUMMER AS A SYMBOL

ALL the products of the earth, which the sunshine and showers of spring quickened into life, continue to grow, through the fervent months of summer. Buds burst into blossoms and set into fruit, and now the fruit is slowly, silently and yet surely developed day by day and month after month, until in the golden glory of the autumn season it hangs in ripened splendour on the drooping bough. In like manner, when the breath of a new spiritual life is Divinely breathed into a believer in Christ, *the life ought henceforth to grow.* It is the desire of God not only to give life, but to give it more and more abundantly. The new man of the Spirit is first vitalized and then developed in the old man of the flesh, like the vital germ in the core of a seed. And it will grow, just in proportion to the measure that the sunshine of Divine truth

and the rain and dew of Divine grace are received and appropriated. This new man is the real man—his own inmost self. The spirit, and not the body or the soul, is the highest part of his nature, and its development into all the power and beauty of which it is capable is the supreme salvation which God desires to bestow. The salvation of a man's spirit ensures the ultimate and eternal salvation of his soul and body also. It is therefore 'a great salvation.' Let it be noted, however, that the large and precious *blessings* Divinely given to the Christian, are not his salvation ; they are only the means of salvation, just as light, heat, and moisture are means of growth to the products of the earth. *Salvation is the upbuilding of the Christian himself into Christ.* It does not consist in pardon and safety, nor in the possession and enjoyment of peace, hope, and happiness, but in the growth of his higher being into fulness of capacity and power. When this is clearly apprehended, then the intelligent believer will take heed to himself and seek above all things the culture of his spirit. Growth is the law of the Christian life, as of all other kinds of life whatsoever. The

life which is not developed will soon decay. It is a great grief to parents when their children do not grow—when either physically or mentally they are stunted and dwarfed; and what else can it be to the Divine Father when His children fail to appropriate the spiritual sustenance which He has so liberally provided, and consequently do not grow? The spiritual progress of many professing Christians is so small that it is not outwardly perceptible. There are others whose growth is chiefly a thing of the intellect rather than of the heart and life. The gospel to them is more of a philosophy to be studied, or a creed to be believed, than a revelation of saving truth to be appropriated and practised; therefore, while their knowledge is increased, their spiritual life and experience remain undeveloped. While growing in knowledge, they should also grow in grace; the former is a means to the latter. All their reading of God's Word and hearing of Christ's gospel will prove wholly useless, if not worse, unless they are impelled thereby to be more trustful and loving, more humble and holy, more prayerful and useful, more spiritually minded and Christlike.

Look at the growth of Trees as emblems of the growth of Christian life. This emblem is frequently used in the Scriptures. The Lord's people are called 'trees of righteousness.' The comparison is both beautiful and instructive.

First, They are 'planted.' In their unsaved condition, men are like self-sown trees. They bring forth only the wild fruit of an unregenerate nature, and are altogether unable to yield the results of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. Christians are not self-sown but planted, and they are planted not by men but by God Himself. As Isaiah has said, 'They are the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.' No human being is spiritual or Christian by the first birth of the flesh, but only by the second or new birth of the Spirit. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 'Marvel not that I said unto thee,' said Christ to Nicodemus, 'ye must be born again.' It is a moral necessity. All God's planted trees have really been transplanted. They grew in the soil of Nature before they were set in the soil of Grace. And the process of transplanting was not ef-

fected by miracle, but by the use of means. The Holy Ghost is the Divine and special agent of conversion; but human agents are accepted and used by Him as helpers in this great and glorious work. Parents, teachers, preachers, and Christians are asked by Christ to co-operate with His Spirit in saving and sanctifying souls. What is the work which they may accomplish? It is their duty and privilege to make known the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the instrument employed by the Holy Ghost to regenerate and renew. He neither preaches nor teaches, and can only use the truth as others make it known. Their work is therefore as essential as His own. If Christians all the world over would but make a right use of the Word of Life by holding it fast for their own enlightenment and culture, and then holding it forth for the conversion of the ungodly and the building up of those who believe, the whole human race might speedily be Christianized, and the will of God universally obeyed.

Second, 'The righteous are planted *in the house of the Lord*.' The most prayerful and progressive, holy and useful Christians have always

been frequenters of the public sanctuary and lovers of the holy brethren. Every community of loving Christian people is a garden of the Lord—'a garden enclosed'—where His goodly fruit trees are planted, nurtured and sheltered.

Third, '*The righteous man shall flourish like the palm tree.*' The palm is one of the most stately, beautiful, and fruitful trees in the world, and is therefore a striking emblem of the consecrated Christian, who aspires towards moral perfection, sets his affections on things above where Christ is, and supremely upon Christ Himself, and both by word and work brings forth fruit abundantly.

Fourth, '*He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*' The growth of the cedar may seem to be slow, but it is sure and steady, and continues to strengthen and develop for centuries. In like manner a Christian may not appear to others to be rapidly advancing in his spiritual life and experience, but if he is thoroughly in earnest his progress will be real and in some measure manifest. The lovers of Christ are the best and most useful of men, and exercise an influence upon others far more uplifting and re-

fining than that of those who are merely worldly. They are rooted in Christ, clothed with moral beauty, and filled with spiritual power—a beauty which is recognised by God, angels, and men, and a power which affects all those with whom they are brought into fellowship. And never shall they cease to grow. For ever and ever they shall ascend into loftier altitudes of heavenly wisdom, take on increasingly the charms of moral purity, and send out in ever-increasing dimensions the fragrance-breathing branches of spiritual life and influence.

Fifth, '*His beauty shall be as the olive tree.*' Olive trees are very beautiful, especially in their perennial greenness, and extraordinary fertility. But the beauty of the olive tree is only a far-off emblem of the far fairer loveliness of a truly Christian life. The beauty of the one is natural and perishing, while that of the other is spiritual and enduring. The flowers and fruits of the former are formed and ripened by the natural sun, while those of the latter are developed and matured in the light of the Divine Sun and by all the holy and hallowed influences of the spiritual heavens. There is no beauty upon earth to be

compared with that which arrays and adorns a growing Christian character. Says the gifted author of *Loyalty to Christ*, "Muse on the work of God; for the beauty of His work in Nature mirrors the beauty of His work in you. By Nature's beautifulness He makes His appeal, seeking to stir in you the longing to be made beautiful."

Sixth, '*His smell is as Lebanon.*' The odours breathed by the trees 'of the goodly mountain,' can be detected by the sense of smell at a great distance. Especially in the early morning, while yet the dew glistens on the leaves and the sunshine plays among the branches, the sweet exhalations sent forth into the spring or summer atmosphere are most delicious and reviving. In like manner the spiritual life is full of fragrance. It is fragrant unto God, for all its prayers and praises, beneficence and well-doing ascend into His presence like the incense of sacrifice. And it is also fragrant unto men, for the very "ground is hallowed where a good man treads." He sweetens and purifies the moral atmosphere wherever he goes. Vice is abashed, and virtue rejoices in his presence. Not only so, but his

influence remains behind him. 'The memory of the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance,' while 'the name of the wicked shall rot.'

Seventh, '*They that dwell under his shadow shall return.*' The influence of the Christian life is attractive and influential. By the persuasive power of goodness, which always acts like a mighty moral magnet, the Christlike man draws after him the attention, the thought, and the desire of all around who are susceptible to its influence. It is thus that he draws in the bosom of his own family, where he is a kind and thoughtful husband, a wise and loving father, and a considerate and gracious master. All his commands are laws, but every one of them is a law of love. His religion is not a mere profession, but a life. It coins the words which he speaks and inspires all the actions he performs. Hence the truly Christian home is a type of Heaven—a place of sunny brightness and holy peace. All the dwellers under its roof are consciously and unconsciously affected by the thoroughly Christian life which they see exemplified before them. They recognise its worth,

and feel its power, and under the spell of its gracious attractiveness yield themselves unto God. And the influence of a genuine Christian goes beyond the sphere of the domestic circle. In the church where he worships, in the office or warehouse where he labours, and in the locality where he resides, men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus, and are impelled inwardly, if not outwardly, to say, 'we will go with you, for we see that the Lord is with you.'

'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,' is frequently enjoined in the New Testament scriptures. It is a remarkable injunction. What does it signify? It signifies that Christians are to *clothe* themselves with Christ, and wear Him as the beautiful and perfect dress of their renewed and sanctified nature. How is this to be done? It cannot be effected by any mere external copying of His example. There are many persons who regard Christ as the wisest of Teachers and the noblest of our race, who do not accept Him as the Divine Redeemer of humanity. They endeavour by an outward imitation to follow His example; but this can never effect a full and abiding salvation in any human being.

Reformation and Regeneration, are vastly different things. The one is external, the other internal. The former is attained by a superficial amendment of conduct, while the latter can be realized only by a radical change of heart and character! A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit! No amount of intellectual admiration of Christ or external imitation of His example can make any living soul truly Christ-like. The only way in which men can clothe themselves with Christ, is by receiving Him through faith and love into the heart, and then giving Him manifestation in conduct and life. In other words, He must be 'put on' *from within* and not from without. This is the Divine method of clothing. Look abroad upon universal Nature and you will see that every creature and thing which God made has thus been clothed. Man is the only exception to this universal law. He puts on his dress from without. And he does so, because his nature is fallen and sinful. Hence it is that his clothing has no vital relation to his character. It is not thus, that Christ must be put on. *The trees tell us plainly, how to put Him on.* In the season of

spring God says to them, 'Awake from your winter slumbers, and clothe yourselves with the resurrection-robes of fair and fragrant loveliness which it is My purpose you should wear, and to this great end put on the sunshine of the sky and all the vitalizing powers of universal nature, which breathe in the zephyr, fall in the rain, and gently distil in the dews of evening.' They hear His gracious voice, and are quickly responsive to His call. Under the potent powers of light and heat, air and moisture, their dormant life is speedily stirred into activity and hastens to appear in manifold forms of exquisite beauty. Buds and blossoms, foliage and fruit are neither more nor less, than just the putting on from within all the influences and virtues of the heavens. Let Christians everywhere learn the parable of the trees and follow their example. May we assume the attitude of recipiency towards Christ as they do to the natural sun. May we open our inmost being to the Divine Spirit, as they do to the wind the rain and the dew, and God will bestow upon us His own life, and enable us to put on Christ, even as the forces of the firmament

descend into the receptive trees, or into the ground and renew the face of the earth. And if thus we receive Him, the results will be glorious. First of all, we are certain to form and develop *a Christlike character.* Receiving His truth into the mind, His love into the heart and His Spirit into the spirit, we shall be changed into His image from glory to glory. Second, this Christlike character, is equally certain to manifest itself in *a truly Christian life.* Character reveals itself in conduct. The graces which shone with such unearthly lustre in the life of Jesus, will also shine in ours, in proportion as we put Him on. And these graces will form a robe of adorning, which shall be beautiful to God, angels and men. Ay! and it shall be so eternally, for all unlike the tender leaves, the exquisite buds, the fragrant blossoms and the slowly-growing fruit upon the trees, it will never decay or perish. The life and character of every man are vitally related. The latter is the outcome and necessary result of the former. If his life be merely natural, his character will be natural also — earthly, corrupted, perishing. But if his life be spiritual, then will

his character be spiritual also—heavenly, pure, immortal. The formation and development of such a character, is the Divine purpose of man's existence—the purpose for which he was created, and for which he has been redeemed. Character is his *chief* possession, for it is far more to a man than his intellectual knowledge or material wealth or social position. Nay more, a man's character is his *only* possession—the one thing which is really his and will be his for ever. It not only determines his moral worth in this world, but it is the only thing he will take with him out of time into eternity. And he *must* take it—it cannot be left behind. Other things which perhaps he would gladly take with him into the great Hereafter, cannot be taken. They are all earthly in their nature and the earth will retain them. But character is a man's own. He himself formed and developed it, and wherever he goes it will go with him, and determine his destiny. A worldling may well tremble and be afraid as he thinks of this terrible fact, but the Christian has no need to fear. His destiny will be blessed, because his character is Christian and Christlike. It is well with the godly. Let all

such, carefully cultivate true character. And how is that to be done? It can be done only in one way, namely, by cherishing in the heart the spiritual life of Christian love, and then giving to that love continually, a natural embodiment and manifestation in Christian obedience and service. A genuine love for God and man thus nurtured and exhibited, will not only naturally but also necessarily develop a truly Christian character and fulfil the Divine purpose of existence.

CHAPTER XVII

THE AUTUMN AS A SYMBOL

SPRING is the season of Quickening, Summer the season of Growth and Autumn the season of Fruition—the time for gathering and garnering the precious products of the earth. Autumn therefore is the symbol in Nature, of old age in the sphere of the physical and of a ripe Christian experience in the realm of the spiritual. The growth of corn, is beautifully emblematic of a progressive religious life. The operations of sowing, springing, growing, fruiting, ripening and reaping in the Kingdom of Nature, are all strictly analogous to the spiritual processes carried on by human and Divine agency in the kingdom of grace. The Lord of both kingdoms once and again in His Gospel declared the resemblance of the two (Matt. xiii. 1–30).

Look first, at the growth of corn in the natural kingdom. First of all the farmer opens up his land with the plough to all the atmospheric influences of the natural heavens, by which it is softened and sweetened, purified and pulverized, and prepared for the seed which is to be cast into its bosom. Then, in due time, when the weather is suitable the seed is carefully and intelligently sown, and covered with earth by the use of the harrows. In the course of a few days, during which it may be fertilizing showers have fallen, let a seed be uncovered and examined and it will be found that already a change has come over it. It is no longer the dry, hard substance which was sown, but is now soft and juicy and has a tender sprout coming out at either end. One of these striking downward into the earth becomes a root to draw nourishment from the soil for the development of the seed, while the other rising upward into the air to feed upon the sunshine the dew and the rain appears as a delicate green blade. And as all the other seeds spring up in like manner, the whole field is covered with verdure, and becomes an object of beauty upon which the eyes

may rest with unwearying delight. As the tiny blades lengthen and broaden they gently move under the breath of the wind, and glisten in the golden sunshine after refreshing rain. By and bye, when the corn-blades have developed into tall stalks from which other blades depend, a swelling may be seen near the top of each—a swelling which daily increases and rises higher and higher, until the infant ear bursts its swaddling bands and lifts itself up—empty but hopeful—to the fervent rays of the June or July sun. In due time the grains of new corn form, enlarge and consolidate, until they bend the ears by their weight and cause them to assume that attitude of meek humility which genuine worth always manifests. 'First the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear.' But the corn, is not yet ripe. It requires continued sunshine to harden and mature it, and brisk autumnal breezes to loosen its roots and prepare it for the sickle. These the God of the seasons does not fail to send, and then the fields are ready unto harvest. Work, faith and patient obedience to Divine law have all been rewarded, and in the mellow radiance of the advancing year

the golden treasures of the earth are gathered for the sustenance and comfort of mankind.

Turn now, and behold the formation and development of Christian life in the spiritual kingdom. The first work of the Divine Spirit in man,—which He effects through human agency and the instrumentality of gospel truth,—is 'to convince of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come.' By driving the ploughshare of conviction through the cold and hardened heart, He opens it up to the influences of the spiritual heavens and prepares it to receive 'the good seed of the Word.' Without this ploughing the sowing would prove of little avail, for the seed would lie on the surface of the understanding nly, and not go down into the heart where alone it can fructify and grow. But when the truth as it is in Jesus is rightly received, it awakens a sense of guilt in the bosom and impels the soul to true penitence and to a yearning desire for pardon and cleansing. And now—through the exercise of faith in Christ as a Divine Saviour—a new life is quickened in the spirit. That new life is spiritual in its nature and eternal in duration. The seed of truth

sends down a root of faith into the soul—a root which draws forth all its powers into activity and causes it to grow. The vigour and rapidity of its growth will depend on the strength of faith and its receptive capacity. When faith is largely exercised and spiritual blessings are freely received, the advancement of the believer in the Christian life is both rapid and delightful. It will be seen in change of character and conduct. At first it may be barely discernible —like the sprouting corn in early spring—but as the days pass by it will be steadily developed, until the whole breadth of his life is covered with the beautiful results of Christian attainment, and he stands revealed in the moral loveliness of a regenerated and renewed nature. But his sanctification is not yet perfected, and there are many hindrances to its progress. Old evil habits will tempt him, and as besetting sins they must be watched and resisted. The development of spiritual life is very beautiful. All the virtues and graces of Christian character come into manifestation in speech and action, and with satisfied complacency the Divine Husbandman looks down and blesses the springing thereof.

The ripened fruit of this life and character is love, which is the crown of virtue, the perfection of grace and the full and final development of faith. 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.' And when love is matured, then comes the harvest—the ingathering and Home-gathering of souls. The angel-reapers thrust in their sickles with rejoicing, and God's elect ones fall before them like corn fully ripe. They are then carried away into the Paradise of the Blessed—whither Christ Himself went in spirit when His body died upon the cross—and there we may be sure they are joyfully received with greetings of welcome and songs of adoring praise.

In the language of modern science, the *Laws* of Nature are credited with all the operations and effects which result in the bountiful and beneficent Harvests annually gathered from the bosom of the earth. But surely it is 'science falsely so-called' which would shut out God from His universe, and put all natural phenomena under the inexorable wheels of blind mechanical forces. Men themselves have marvellous power over the unvarying and inflexible laws of Nature.

They cannot create laws, but they can chain the laws already created to the practical uses of life, and employ them to secure ten thousand beneficial results. And shall we suppose for a moment that He who brought these laws into existence has now no further power over them, and that all the operations of Nature must be traced to them rather than to Him? We shall not consent to be thus shut out from the beaming face and loving smile of our Divine Father, and handed over to the unconscious workings of mere laws. We refuse to believe that they are either independent and supreme in themselves, or that they have been ordained by God to act as His deputies. We prefer to hold fast that reasonable faith which glorifies Him and exalts us—that faith which is warranted and enjoined by the sacred Scripture—that faith which makes Nature's laws the ministers of the Divine beneficence—that faith which looks above and beyond all mere secondary causes to the great First Cause, and ascribes all blessing and bounty directly to His Paternal care and love. Our hearts cannot find an object of gratitude in the material universe; their instinctive aspirations

and affections point upward from Nature to God, and recognise a loving Father's hand stretched out and opened to supply the wants of all His creatures and children. Tell us that light, heat, air, and moisture are our benefactors, and a wintry chill falls upon our hearts which causes us to realize all the misery and dreary desolation of orphanhood; and we regain comfort and joy only by lifting up the eyes of our trust and affection to the face of God, and saying with the Psalmist, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,' or with the poet—

"Thy hands are on the planet's heart;
She thrills to feel Thy touch Divine;
Thou dost, dear Lord, the life impart,
Whose substances are bread and wine.
Thou openest Thy bounteous hand,
And golden harvests grace the land."*

Year after year a more or less abundant harvest is safely gathered into the storehouses of the world. And a rich blessing is in it for all classes and conditions of men. It oils the wheels of industry, gives a fresh impetus to the trade and commerce of nations, and mightily increases the wealth of mankind. Three things may be said

* Note B.

of every harvest. *First*, It is a *monumental* manifestation of Divine goodness. It is the fulfilment of a great and gracious promise made by God in the morning of human history in circumstances the most memorable and sublime. 'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter shall not cease.' It was a glorious promise, and has never been broken, for not once has the annual harvest failed. Here and there at times partial famines have occurred, but never a universal dearth. 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever.' *Second*, The Harvest is a *marvellous* manifestation of Divine goodness. The seed from which it was developed, had no existence upon the earth before man was created, as the records of geology testify, neither has it ever been found in a wild condition, and therefore we may safely conclude that it is not a cultivated product of human ingenuity and skill. Not only so, but it was just as perfect in the beginning, as it is now. The seed given by Joseph to his brethren, like that recently found in the hands of mummies, was not in the least inferior to that which was harvested a few months ago. Its origin

was directly Divine. And this is also true of its growth and multiplication. From the moment when it is cast into the soil man ceases to have any further influence over it; it springeth and groweth up, 'he knoweth not how.' From first to last the process is marvellous. *Third*, The Harvest is also a *merciful* manifestation of Divine goodness. That goodness is manifested to all the angels in pure love, but it comes to men in mercy because they are sinful beings. Every gift they receive, and every blessing they enjoy, comes to them in mercy. Ay! and the lowest temporal comforts, just as certainly as the highest spiritual blessings, come through Jesus Christ, the one and only channel of redeeming love. The latest harvest gathered was God's great gift to those now living, and therefore to us. For us the balmy spring flushed all the earth with green—for us the luxuriance of summer was spread over wood and field and plain—for us the orchards burst into blossom, and mellowed into fruit—for us the corn ripened in the meadow, and rustled in the autumn breeze—for us the sunshine and shower, the warmth of day, and the cooling and

refreshing dews of night—for us, ay! even for us who now live and enjoy the blessings of life, did God set all the springs of universal Nature in motion that our hearts and homes might be filled with food and gladness. 'The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.'

What return ought we to give for His annual gift, and the unceasing display of merciful goodness? 'What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us?' Can we give Him anything in return? In an outward and literal sense we cannot, for we have nothing which we have not received from Himself. And yet it is possible for all men to give to God. They can yield unto Him their wills, which are free, and give Him their hearts, with all their affections and longings, which are also free. This is the grand renunciation—the all-containing gift which man can give to God. When the heart is given, the *will* is certain to be yielded up, and the will is the master faculty of the soul—the manhood of a man. When the heart is given to God the whole *life* is also given, for obedience and service are the natural issues of love. Therefore the Divine Father says to every

hearer of the gospel, 'My son, give me thine heart.' If the heart be given everything is given with it, and if it be withheld then nothing is bestowed. Men can truly praise and please God, only by loving Him whole-heartedly and manifesting their love in obedience. And they can all render unto Him grateful thanks, in ways we may indicate. *First, we may thank God with the lips.* When we receive a gift from any one, we never fail to say 'thank you,' and surely God ought to be thanked for all His goodness, and in a very special manner for the great gift of the Harvest. *Second, we may thank God with the heart.* Lip-thanks have become one of the common courtesies of daily life, and oftentimes they may be the thanks of the lips and nothing more. But God cannot be thanked in any such formal and superficial way. Mere spoken thanks given to Him are a mockery. 'He looketh upon the heart,' and if He sees no genuine gratitude there, He receives no true thanks at all. *Third, we may thank God with the hand.* When He bestows His gifts upon us, He says, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' The Divine Father delights to see His children open-handed like

Himself; and this they are certain to be, according to the measure in which they receive and cherish His Spirit. That man does not truly thank God for His goodness, who meanly and selfishly keeps it to himself — who takes the Divine gift from the Divine hand into his own, and then encloses it there as in the heart of a rock. As Robert Burns has truly said,—

> "The heart benevolent and kind,
> The most resembles God."

Christians ought to be generous according to their ability, freely giving for the spread of the gospel, the maintenance of philanthropic institutions, and the support and comfort of God's struggling poor. Year after year, by His great universal harvest-gift, He provides enough for the whole human family, but in this terribly corrupted and sin-disordered world, where selfishness and thoughtlessness abound, the gift is often badly distributed. This is not the doing of God, but of men. Oh! for the coming of Him who shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper, and shall

"Distribute with His own right hand,
The equal gifts of harvest-land."

Meanwhile, He asks all His people to be the stewards and almoners of His bounty, and encourages them to be thoughtful and helpful by saying, 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord.' *Lastly, we may thank God with the life.* This is the highest form of thanksgiving, when the Christian is impelled by the loving-kindness of God to present his whole being as a living sacrifice, and make the entire round of his daily existence a psalm of grateful, loving and adoring praise, and the continual outflow of beneficent well-doing.

But now we inquire what is the great end which God has in view, in bestowing the gift of Harvest? An important question this! Is it merely to sustain the physical life of men, and give them some measure of external comfort and happiness? O no! God has an object in view far higher and grander than the supply of their bodily wants and temporal comforts. Nature, with all her processes and results, exists for the spiritual use and eternal well-being of humanity. It is the ground upon which God

comes to man and exercises His saving love and sanctifying power towards him. All the wonderful workings of Nature are Divinely intended to aid his spiritual regeneration and renewal. The supreme object of God in sending His earthly harvests is to perpetuate the opportunity of man's return to Himself, through faith in Christ, sanctification by the Spirit, and growth in grace. Every harvest is an emblem of Him who came forth from the Father as the Bread of God to give life—spiritual life—unto men. Material bread is for the body, and Divine bread for the higher nature. We freely partake of the one that we may daily feast upon the other. 'He that eateth me,' said Christ, 'even he shall live by me.' *How then may we eat of Christ?* Only by appropriating His truth in faith and love for the common uses of daily life. When two friends meet, and on the ground of affinity enjoy fellowship one with another, what are they doing? They are eating and drinking of each other. As they believingly and lovingly receive each other's words, they are also partaking of one another's spirit out of which the words flow. It is thus and not otherwise that we eat and

drink of Christ, and become recipients of His Spirit. Therefore He said 'He that receiveth my words receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me;' 'My words, they are spirit, and they are life;' 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The prolonging of bodily life, and the supply of food for its sustenance, are visible tokens of God's gracious intentions towards the higher life of His children, and their everlasting well-being. They subserve His merciful design that ample opportunity should be given to every hearer of His gospel to return to a righteous and harmonious relationship with Himself, and live for ever in the sweet enjoyment of His favour and love. In other words, the natural and the temporal are meant to serve the spiritual and the eternal. *Everything which exists is intended by God to minister to that which is above it.* This is a universal law. The mineral world serves the vegetable; the vegetable serves the animal; the animal serves the physical (in man); the physical serves the intellectual; the intellectual serves the moral; the moral serves the spiritual, and

the spirit of man fulfils its Divinely-intended use and attains its proper destiny when it freely, joyfully and intelligently serves the Spirit of God. All things come from God, and are meant to return to God, that thereby the great circle of Divine purpose and use, beauty and blessedness may be completed. Let every one of His children use temporal mercies for the attainment of spiritual ends, by seeking the development of his own higher life and the salvation and upbuilding of others! While all the natural heavens minister to the earth that the earth may minister to humanity, all the spiritual heavens, in like manner, minister to spiritual men and women, that they may minister unto God by ministering unto their fellow creatures. They stand in the very centre of a universe of blessing, that, being saved and sanctified, enriched and comforted themselves, they may also become channels of grace and instruments of blessing unto many.

Man was created and redeemed, that being personally saved and sanctified he may grow up into a glorious human harvest. Said Jesus to His disciples, and what He said to them He

says to all His followers, 'I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit.' And in his Epistle to the Ephesians Paul says, 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' A truly Christian character is Divinely expected to give itself embodiment and manifestation not only in Christian conduct in daily life, but also *in special Christian service.* 'Feed my lambs'—'feed my sheep'—'compel them to come in'—'preach my gospel to every creature'—'occupy till I come,' these and many other injunctions were given by Christ not only to apostles, preachers and missionaries, but to every disciple in every age and country to the latest hour of time. We are all commanded to be 'workers together with God.' To call upon Him in prayer to save and sanctify souls, whilst we are doing nothing to help Him, is little short of blasphemy. When we say to Him 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord,' His response is this, 'Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.' The Divine Spirit saves and sanctifies

souls through the instrumentality of the Truth, but He never preaches the truth, nor makes known the gospel to men. That is our work, and blessed are they who do it! 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.' 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give.' 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Only by loving Christ, and serving God in the service of humanity, can any human being live a true life, develop a true character, and bring forth fruit unto God. The more he brings forth of that good fruit, the greater will be his present usefulness, and the larger his heavenly reward. *The rewards of the future*, as Christ Himself has told us, *are all to be given for service*; 'Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man *according as his work shall be*.' There will be no favouritism in the Divine awarding of rewards; and every service rendered unto men in love, and for Christ's sake, shall be remembered by Him: 'Whosoever shall give

to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Having respect to the great recompense of the reward, let every Christian serve the Lord with gladness, and say,—

"Take my life, Lord, let it be,
Ever, only, all for Thee."

Unsaved men and women are all growing unto a harvest, just as surely as are the saved and sanctified. What shall the harvest be? Tares grow up with wheat in God's cornfield, but their destinies shall be vastly different. The reaping, gathering, winnowing, and separating time must come, and what shall then happen? Christ has told us, 'Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.' Let sinners flee from the burning! And how can they do that? Only by ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, truly accepting Christ as a personal Saviour, and through the receiving of His Spirit living

a godly life and building up a truly Christian character. To all such 'there is therefore now no condemnation.'

Professing Christians, who are not Christian indeed, are also growing unto a harvest. In June and July there are many ears in the field of growing corn which are empty, or, if not empty, are only filled with dust. For the present they look just as fair and promising as those around them; but judgment must come at last, and then their real condition shall be detected and exposed. Those empty ears are strikingly emblematic of all mere professors. They may pass as good Christians in the estimation of men, but the hour is coming when they shall be weighed in the balances of infinite knowledge and rectitude and found wanting. 'Not every one that *saith* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father who is in heaven.' It is not profession but practise which God regards. 'When Jesus saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever; and presently the fig tree

withered away.' 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

Genuine lovers of Christ, are also growing unto a harvest. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, and then the outflowings of love, are joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.' These beautiful and beneficent effects of love are brought forth in larger or lesser abundance, by all truly Christian persons. They grow in grace and in knowledge, and serve the Lord with gladness. And there are those whose full corn in the ear is fast hastening on to ripeness in the autumn sunshine. Manifold infirmities it may be are creeping into their physical system, bringing weakness and pain; but instead of fearing these "blessings in disguise," which come to loosen their hold upon the earth, rather let them 'Look up and lift up their heads, knowing that their (full) redemption draweth nigh.' 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age,' and in spirit and experience be 'fat and flourishing.' To all real lovers of Christ, the last days of life are the happiest, the holiest and the best.

When the fields are reaped and the fruit of the

orchards is gathered, Nature everywhere begins to show signs of decay.

> "The summer fades, the autumn shades
> Will coldly soon be here;
> The fitful blast is whirling past
> The russet leaves and sere.
> The birds of song, a sportive throng,
> Have fled the tuneless bowers,
> As if they grew when spring was new,
> And perished with the flowers."

But Nature is beautiful, even in decay. What splendours of glory she puts on in her autumn days! The trees array themselves with the most gorgeous colours; the hedges by the wayside festoon their brows with beauty, and even the commonest shrubs and plants receive from the artistic fingers of the sunbeams all the tints of the rainbow. Every intelligent beholder must admire. *And thus it is, with the aged Christian.* His earthly life is temporal and must sink into decay. The eyes grow dim, and the ears dull of hearing; the footsteps become more and more feeble and tottering until at last they can move no more, and every sense and faculty flags and fails. Ere long, the silver cord shall be loosed,

and the golden bowl broken, the pitcher broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, because man goeth to his long home. But his end is glorious. He fades away like a leaf—beautifully, gently, hopefully, usefully. All his matured virtues and rich experience come into view, and find expression, not only in his words and actions, but even on his face. His utterances and deeds are full of meekness and gentleness, gratitude and grace, and the inward glory of the loving spirit is already beaming forth from his peaceful and radiant countenance, and is both seen and admired by the dear ones who surround him. He looks back upon his active and useful life with profoundest thankfulness to God, by whose help he was enabled to do some little good to his fellow creatures in the Church and the world. And he also looks forward to the glorious future with confidence and joy, and is fully assured that the hopes of his heart are divinely-inspired prophecies which are certain to be fulfilled. The little cloudlets of regret and sorrow which may gather around him in his dying hours are glorified and changed into unearthly splendours by the radiant bright-

ness and joy of his departing spirit, which passes away at length like a setting sun to shine with unclouded and unending glory in another and a better sphere. With such a spectacle in view, who would hesitate to say, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his'?

But the end of the Christian is only a new beginning—a beginning that shall never end. Death to him, is the portal to an endless and blissful Immortality. He became the possessor of 'eternal life'—the very life of God—when he received Christ as his personal Saviour, and that life, triumphing over death and the grave, shall continue in the great Hereafter to become more and more intense, joyful and active for evermore. His character also, which became truly Christian and Christlike, in measure, from the very hour of his conversion shall become increasingly spiritual and Godlike eternally, and as it flows forth into conduct it shall continually embody and manifest itself in work and worship for the good of others and the glory of God. In all the fertile fields of Heaven the golden grain of Christ-saved, Spirit-sanctified and God-filled souls shall take on

more and more of the Divine loveliness, inbreathe and outbreathe the very breath and spirit of the Holy One and be endlessly evolved and built up into the image and likeness of the perfect and glorified Saviour. A most blissful expectation, which when fully realized shall cause us to 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' May this be the Destiny of every reader of this book!

And now our pleasant task is ended. However imperfectly it may have been accomplished, we have yet been enabled we think, briefly and simply to show the moral unity of Nature, the harmony of all her parts and the oneness of all her teachings with those of sacred Scripture. Our words have been specially addressed to ardent lovers of Nature, devout students of Scripture, and earnest seekers for God. If the reader has clearly apprehended what we have written, not merely part by part, but as a perfect whole, then he cannot fail to recognise that Nature and the Bible are twin revelations which make known the same truths and relationships and are fitted to co-operate in working out

the same moral and eternal results. 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' Let each be read and pondered in the light of the other, and both separately and unitedly they will minister the best of blessings, for the intellectual culture, the moral development, the spiritual uplifting and the everlasting well-being of mankind.

NOTES

Note A—Page 16

The Visible God

The late much-beloved and greatly lamented Dr. Dale of Birmingham in his highly instructive work on *Christian Doctrine*, says on pages 157–159, "*The Eternal Father would have remained for ever unknown but for the Word* that was 'in the beginning with God, and was God.' 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' 'No man hath *seen* God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath *revealed* Him.' 'No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.' A God that in some sense transcends the universe is necessary to thought and to worship: and the transcendence of the divine life is maintained in the Father; while in Christ God is manifested to the intellect, the conscience, and the heart of man. We need, I say, a God who is 'afar off,' infinitely greater than ourselves—belonging to other

realms of life. *But we also need a God who is 'nigh at hand.'* The legendary incarnations of divine persons, which have so great a place in some Oriental religions, are rude and coarse witnesses to this craving. *A remote God, reigning in inaccessible heights of majesty and glory, does not satisfy us.* He is too far away for us to be sure of His sympathy, compassion, and grace. We think that He can have no real knowledge of our troubles, our perplexities, our moral and spiritual conflicts. To Him, on those heights of peace, human life must present an altogether different aspect from that which it presents to us, who are weary under its burdens, vexed by its cares, disheartened by its disappointments, incessantly harassed by its temptations. There are times, I suppose, in the history of many of us when, though we hardly acknowledge it to ourselves, there is a latent discontent that He who created the world should, as we imagine, have no share in its troubles.

"The Christian doctrine of the Trinity meets these cravings, and more than meets them. Christ not only *reveals* the Infinite and the Eternal God, who in His Infinitude and Eternity transcends the universe and remains for ever above and apart from it, but He accepts human limitations, knows, by actual experience, human joys and the sharpest of human pains; He hungers and thirsts; He has not where to lay His head; He has friends who love Him and whom He loves; He has bitter enemies; He is tempted; He dies

a cruel death. We sometimes resent the shame and the suffering which by the divine order of the world come upon us from the sins of other men, and are almost ready to ask—not, Has God forgotten to be gracious?—but, Has He forgotten to be just?—and Christ dies for the sins of the race. This is a most wonderful and glorious revelation of God. It is true that God transcends the universe, and that the distance between Him and our race is infinite: but it is also true that in the Eternal life of the Godhead there is a Divine 'Person' so near akin to us that it was possible for Him to take our life into His own, to 'become Flesh,' to make His home in the world, to share the happiness and the misery of the race. *Now, we know that God is a God 'nigh at hand,' as well as a God 'afar off.'"* (The italics are ours.)

All this is gloriously true of the *Incarnate* Son of God. But suppose "the accident of sin," as Dr. Fairbairn rightly calls it, had never happened, what then? Would sinless humanity have had no craving for 'a God nigh at hand,' to reveal 'the God afar off'? Had the first of our race no such craving? Was it necessary that man should become a fallen and guilty creature, and that the Son of God should be 'made of a woman,' and made 'under the law,' in order that the eternally Invisible and 'far off God' should be revealed and brought nigh unto men? Surely not! And if not, then how could God the Father be 'revealed,' 'declared,' 'manifested,' by the Son, if the Son also was God, *and nothing else?* Could

a purely Divine Being reveal a Being who is purely Divine? If 'the Word who was in the beginning with God, and was God,' was *only God*, and therefore necessarily invisible to all created beings like the Father Himself, how could He bring the Invisible One into view, and be a God 'nigh at hand'? If this question were fairly faced by theologians, they would probably be impelled to give a simple and natural interpretation of all the Old Testament Scriptures which speak of the appearances of the Lord God as '*a man*,' and also of those in the New Testament which refer to His pre-Incarnate nature. What are the chief of the latter? Paul tells us in Colossians i. 15, that the *Creator* was 'the *image* of the Invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,' and in Philippians ii. 5, 6, that Jesus Christ was 'originally in the *form* of God.' Now what do 'image' and 'form' signify? Surely they mean the same thing, and refer to a Being who was *visible*. 'The image of the Invisible,' was that which brought the Invisible into view, and 'the form of God' that which 'declared' and 'manifested' the unseen, and made Him who was 'a God afar off,' 'a God nigh at hand.' Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses were familiar with the Visible God; and many others in the Old Testament era, such as Joshua, Nadab, Abihu, seventy of the elders of Israel (Exodus xxiv. 9–11), Manoah and his wife, were privileged once at least, if not more frequently, to see Him face to face and to talk with Him. How? '*As a man with his friend.*' Had sin never entered the world,

He would have been the Visible God to all men for ever and ever, just as He will be in the great hereafter to all the redeemed. When He became Incarnate He did not become 'Man' but '*flesh*,' that He might take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and when that great redemptive work was finished He rose from the dead and ascended into glory, not in the flesh and blood body of His humiliation (which was not capable of inheriting the kingdom of God) (Cor. xv. 50)—but in a spiritual body which is now glorified for ever, with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He is now as then '*the Word of God*,' and is not a purely Divine Being, but the God-Man and the Visible God (Rev. xix. 12, 13).

"Theories of kenosis are being more and more pushed to the front" in recent theological discussions, and it is well that it should be so. Why? Because a correct Theology is not possible, so long as a true and scriptural Christology has not been attained. 'No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him,' was Christ's own declaration (Matt. xi. 27). He was and is 'the Truth,' and therefore nothing can be more worthy of a thoughtful, devout, and persistent consideration than the *nature* He possessed as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the glorified Saviour of men. To misapprehend that is to be mistaken at the very core of our conceptions of truth, and therefore we are likely to go astray in our conclusions regarding His incarnation and work. Rightly to appre-

hend His original relationship to humanity enables us clearly to understand the nature and necessity of His descent into 'flesh,' and also the purpose and scope of the great sacrifice which He voluntarily offered on Calvary.

What is the meaning of the words in Philippians ii. 6, 7—'who being (originally) in the *form* of God . . . took upon him the *form* of a servant'? Many of our best theologians and commentators regard the word 'form' as synonymous with *attributes;* others accept it as equivalent to *glory*, and one or two recent writers have taken it as signifying *status*. The very fact that so many different opinions are entertained regarding it, is sufficient evidence that the meaning of the remarkable word is not yet clearly apprehended. Our belief is, that not one of the above interpretations expresses the truth. If 'form' means *attributes*, then surely, in denuding Himself of Divine attributes, when He became Incarnate, the Son of God ceased to be Divine. Or if 'form' means *glory*, then the sublime declaration of the apostle only testifies this—that in laying aside 'the form of God' He came without the visible splendour of Deity. In Old Testament times He sometimes appeared in glory (as to Moses in the desert of Midian, Exo. iii. 1–6), and sometimes without the glory (as to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, Gen. xviii. 1–8), but we never read that in the former instance He came 'in the form of God,' and in the latter 'in the form of a servant.' The words 'form' and *glory*, are not synonymous. Then finally, can 'form'

and *status* be accepted, as signifying the same thing? It seems to us that the one refers to *visible appearance*, and the other to *social position*. Let a test be applied to both—a test which ought to be conclusive. 'The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth, and he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all mine house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; *and the form of the Lord shall he behold.*' These are the words of the Lord concerning Himself, and they clearly show that 'form' refers to *visible appearance*—'the form of the Lord shall he *behold*.' Now put *status* in the place of 'form,' and it will at once be seen how utterly inadmissible it is—the *status* of the Lord shall he behold. The difficulty of interpreting the word 'form' does not lie in the word itself, but in the preconceived and mistaken notions with which it is approached. The original form of the Lord was visible, real and human. He was the God Man. When He became Incarnate, He did not descend from Deity into humanity, but from a spiritual and perfect humanity into that which is fleshly and imperfect. Having lived and died for our fallen race, He was 'made perfect through sufferings'; rose from the dead; became spiritualized in body; ascended above all heavens to be glorified as the perfect Man, and there He will be the

Visible God to all created beings for evermore, bringing nigh the unapproachable One, who must eternally remain Invisible and be 'the God afar off.'

Note B—Page 250

The Facts and Speculations of Science

In the fifth chapter of this book we have given large praise to men of science for the patient industry and noble heroism they have manifested, and the numerous and splendid discoveries they have made. We have also urged our readers to make themselves acquainted with these discoveries, as far as possible, through the reading and study of the literature of science. But now we wish to add a word of warning. While accepting the facts of science, beware of the speculations of scientific men. The former are realities—realities of Divine creation—and ought therefore to be received with thankfulness and joy; but the latter are only human suppositions and theorizings, which may be wholly mistaken, and, if mistaken, may therefore endanger the highest happiness and well-being of those who believe them. Christ is the wisest Teacher of men.

NATURE AS A BOOK OF SYMBOLS

Press Notices

"This is another volume by the former much-esteemed Minister of Cambridge Heath Congregational Church. His many friends in this and other neighbourhoods will welcome these pages. They plainly show that the old homiletic force which did so much to build up and maintain the influential ministry which he so long exercised in Hackney is by no means spent, and those who remember and rejoiced in that ministry will be glad to have in their hands a book which will recall many a pleasant and profitable time when they listened to teachings the echoes of which are plainly discernible in this book. Its author is one of those who find—

> 'Sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,
> And good in everything.'

The book reveals the writer's characteristic and intense love of Nature, and his aptitude at perceiving the manifold moral suggestions with which the earth, the heavens, and the sea are so replete. We are left with a feeling of pleased wonder at the writer's clear and lucid style, and charmed and edified with the tender devoutness, spiritual suggestiveness, and radiant beauty which characterize the book as a whole. God's teaching in Nature never had a more loving student, and but seldom a more apt expositor."—*Hackney Mercury.*

"Man, it may be admitted, cannot exist, at least intellectually, without symbols and signs of various sorts and kinds, and the phenomena of Nature lie readiest to his hand, or rather to his eye, for this purpose. As such, they have been used by the poet and the seer in all ages. It does not follow, however, that all signs are equally appropriate; and if it be suggested that this was the primary purpose of the great objects of the natural world, or indeed

entered into their original purpose at all, common sense begins to demur. If the author of this book is too anxious to press Nature into the service of orthodoxy, it will not be denied that he has shown himself to be a man of nice taste and earnest religious feeling, and that he has the power of expressing his thoughts in graceful language."—*The Scotsman.*

"This is a rare book, full of fresh, beautiful, rich, and pregnant thought—a joy to read, and a deep satisfaction and pure delight to muse over and remember. It is difficult to select any part for special commendation. Nor is it needful, for once commenced the book will be read, we doubt not, from cover to cover."—*Aberdeen Free Press.*

"A really strong book, by a bold but careful and deeply reverent thinker. *For those who will take pains with it,* this is a singularly fertilizing book, a great help to all who preach and teach. It is grandly true to the central verities of Revelation and spiritual life, while it overflows with suggestive thoughts. And not least in its educational value, it trains the reader to read for himself, with no other aid than a spiritual eye and the light of the Bible, fresh pages in Nature's great book of symbols."—*The Christian.*

"This is a work from which the reputation of the author will not suffer. Indeed, were he not already pretty widely known to the reading public, this work would bring him into prominence. There are marks of true literary power here ; the style is clear and pointed, at times rising into genuine eloquence, and all through the author contrives to treat his subject with a delightful freshness all his own. Let the reader once begin this work, and he will find it no easy thing to lay it aside till he gets to the end."—*Scottish Leader.*

"Mr. Marshall is always clear, and frequently original. His whole work is replete with suggestive and stimulating ideas strikingly expressed in cultured language, and all dominated by a spirit of reverence which is admirable."—*Dundee Advertiser.*

"This book is chiefly remarkable for three things—a thorough and reverent knowledge of the Bible, a penetrating apprehension of the deeper meanings of Nature, and a gift of singularly felicitous expression, by which the author often embodies his beautiful thoughts in such beautiful diction that we sometimes feel we are reading poetry rather than prose. It must be specially useful to teachers, whether of the old or young, and we trust it may have

the large circulation which it certainly deserves."—*The Jersey Times.*

"This book covers a wide field, and contains a great deal of what is very beautiful as well as very instructive. Mr. Marshall is to be praised for the variety and richness of thought. The student of Nature will look with a keener interest and devouter feelings on its wonders after reading his interpretation of them."—*North British Daily Mail.*

"Here is a living book, brimful of undying interest. Much beautiful and holy thought lives on every page. The thinking steals and creeps quietly along, and is quite fascinating in its dress and manner. It is a long time since we read such a healthy, hopeful, and inspiring book."—*Word and Work.*

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"It is strange that a writer on such a subject as *Nature as a Book of Symbols*, and such a thoughtful writer as Mr. Marshall, should not have met with any of the New Church writings. Had he been so fortunate, his book would have been still more instructive and interesting than it is, and this is saying much, for it is full of pious feeling and thought eloquently expressed, and more likely to be accepted by the Evangelical and general reader than if it treated more scientifically of the doctrine of correspondences. . . . The book deserves a wide circulation, and should be followed by a new edition when the estimable writer has further examined the doctrine of correspondences."—*The New Church Magazine.*

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